



Allegany County Department of Human Services

RFP Response Form

RFP for Community-Led and Community-Operated Informal Mental Health Supports

PROPOSER INFORMATION

Proposer Name: Steel Smiling, an "Organization-in-Residence" of Neighborhood Allies

Authorized Representative Name & Title: Cait Lee, Operations Director of Steel Smiling

Address: 429 Fourth Ave. Suite 1900 Pittsburgh PA 15219

Telephone: [REDACTED]

Email: cait@neighborhoodallies.org

Website: <https://neighborhoodallies.org/>

Legal Status: For-Profit Corp. Nonprofit Corp. Sole Proprietor Partnership

Date Incorporated: 1998

Partners included in this Proposal: Kingsley Association, Center of Life

How did you hear about this RFP? *Please be specific.* Ongoing conversations with DHS staff

Does your organization have a telecommunications device to accommodate individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing? Yes No

*However, we are open to addressing this item as a component of this award.

REQUIRED CONTACTS

	Name	Phone	Email
Chief Executive Officer	Presley Gillespie	[REDACTED]	presley@neighborhoodallies.org
Contract Processing Contact	Cait Lee	[REDACTED]	cait@neighborhoodallies.org
Chief Information Officer	Stephanie Chernay	[REDACTED]	stephanie@neighborhoodallies.org

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Chief Financial Officer	Violet Graham	[REDACTED]	violet@neighborhoodallies.org
MPER Contact*	Julius Boatwright	[REDACTED]	julius@steelsmilingpgh.org

* [MPER](#) is DHS's provider and contract management system. Please list an administrative contact to update and manage this system for your agency.

BOARD INFORMATION

Provide a list of your board members as an attachment or in the space below.

Sallyann Kluz, Director, Office of Public Art, Board Chair

Carolina Pair-Barreto Thor, CEO of the Tull Family Theater, Vice Chair

Karris Jackson, Chief Operating Officer of the Poise Foundation, Secretary

David Serafini, Senior Vice Present of Community Development Banking at PNC, Treasurer

Jonathan Brelsford, Senior Vice President of Finances, and Investments at the Pittsburgh Foundation

Gerald Dickinson, Associate Professor of Law at the University of Pittsburgh

Abigail Horn, Director of the Office of Community Services at Allegheny County DHS

Mark Peterson, (Retired) CEO and Board Member Emeritus of Bridgeway Capital

Morton Stanfield, Senior Vice President of Community Development at Dollar Bank

Tammy Thompson, Executive Director of Catapult Greater Pittsburgh

Diamonte Walker, Chief Executive Officer of the Pittsburgh Scholar House

Board Chairperson Name & Title: Sallyann Kluz, Director for the Office of Public Art

Board Chairperson Address: Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council [REDACTED]

Board Chairperson Telephone: 412.391.2060 x251

Board Chairperson Email: skluz@pittsburghartscouncil.org

REFERENCES

Provide the name, affiliation and contact information [include email address and telephone number] for three references who are able to address relevant experience with your organization.

Please do not use employees of the Allegheny County Department of Human Services as references.

Name: Dr. Raymond Logan

Affiliation/Organization: Logan Consulting Associates

Email Address: [REDACTED]

Phone: 412-608-0013

Name: Dr. Jennifer Madden

Affiliation/Organization: Leverage Point Development

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Email Address: jmadden@lpointdevelopment.com

Phone: [REDACTED]

Name: Bethany Klobuchar

Affiliation/Organization: Staunton Farm Foundation

Email Address: bhemingway@stauntonfarm.org

Phone: [REDACTED]

PROPOSAL INFORMATION

Date Submitted 8/8/2022

Amount Requested: \$650,000

CERTIFICATION

Please check the following before submitting your Proposal, as applicable:

I have read the standard County terms and conditions for County contracts and the requirements for DHS Cyber Security, EEOC/Non-Discrimination, HIPAA and Pennsylvania's Right-to-Know Law.

By submitting this Proposal, I certify and represent to the County that all submitted materials are true and accurate, and that I have not offered, conferred or agreed to confer any pecuniary benefit or other thing of value for the receipt of special treatment, advantaged information, recipient's decision, opinion, recommendation, vote or any other exercise of discretion concerning this RFP.

Choose one:

My Proposal contains information that is either a trade secret or confidential proprietary information and I have included a written statement signed by an authorized representative identifying those portions or parts of my Proposal and providing contact information.

OR

My Proposal does not contain information that is either a trade secret or confidential proprietary information.

ATTACHMENTS

Please submit the following attachments with your Response Form. These can be found at <http://www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations>.

- Partner commitment letters, if applicable

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- MWDBE and VOSB documents
- Allegheny County Vendor Creation Form
- Audited financial reports or other financial documentation for the last three years
- W-9
- At least one letter of support from a community-based organization or community member

REQUIREMENTS

Please respond to the following. The maximum score a Proposal can receive is 125 points. Your response to this section should not exceed 12 pages. (Pages 1-3 are not included in the page count).

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Experience and Leadership (25 points possible)

Organizational Experience Providing Services to/in DHS' Priority Communities

Steel Smiling is a nascent, mental health focused organization, initially established for the sole purpose of providing access to culturally-relevant mental health supports to local Black people. Since that time we have grown into a bustling, first of its kind, "Organization-in-Residence" (OIR) of Neighborhood Allies. This essentially means that we function as a "Program of" or a "department of" Neighborhood Allies while Steel Smiling continues to build capacity. The idea is that after the culmination of the OIR's three-year agreement and learning experience, Steel Smiling will have the option to decide if we would like to officially join Neighborhood Allies (through multiple possible avenues and/or structures) or become our own 501c3 organization.

Steel Smiling was founded in 2015 as a digital resource for Black residents to access culturally-reflective services and resources. In that seven-year span, Steel Smiling has continued to refine and scale our flagship program, Beams to Bridges (BTB), which is a mental health advocacy, workforce development, and educational training initiative. Our organization has also launched a second initiative called the Black Mental Health Fund (BMHF.) This program fundraises dollars for local Black people to receive subsidized and/or no cost mental health and behavioral health services and supports. It also facilitates a "matchmaking" process for Black residents to connect with primarily Black clinicians who possess the skills/expertise requested to meet the individual's healing needs and the availability to take on new clients. Both of Steel Smiling's programs exclusively focus on Pittsburgh's Black residents, who have long been alienated from the traditional mental health system, and deserve to receive appropriate, dignified services and supports while receiving care.

In addition to Steel Smiling possessing an exclusive history of prioritizing Black residents and equitable development within the mental health sector, our mentoring organization (Neighborhood Allies) also has extensive experience centering neighborhoods and communities that have been overlooked by larger systems and institutions. To address these complex needs, Neighborhood Allies is structured as a multi-faceted, community development intermediary organization. Our organization is uniquely positioned to look across systems, between systems, and to observe the connectivity between them. Our strategic examination of these intersections creates opportunities for our team to innovate and develop creative, multi-faceted solutions for the residents we serve. As a Community Development focused-organization, we direct our efforts, resources and time towards supporting "the people" in a given community, the "place" itself, as well as "people in the context of place." It is our belief that authentic, person-centered community work must consider all three of these facets in tandem.

Neighborhood Allies has a wide array of programs from seemingly "disparate" sectors, however, when looked at holistically, demonstrate a clear prioritization of moving the local needle on the Social Determinants of Health (SDOH). Neighborhood Allies supports individuals, nonprofits, small businesses, local real estate developers, community change agents, and other vested community stakeholders through our plethora of programs: real estate, social impact design and architectural services, financial literacy and wellness, digital literacy, equity-focused grants and investments, collaborative partnerships, capacity building and mentorship services, coalition building, and much more.

Organizational Experience Building Trust in DHS' Priority Communities

Steel Smiling takes a strategic, relationship-focused approach in all our interactions, particularly as it pertains to building trust in communities. We believe in resourcing and supporting existing, naturally-occurring nodes of strength, and "adding on" to what already exists in communities

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without trying to “take over,” co-opt or monopolize existing efforts. Steel Smiling also takes the stance that community members and other neighborhood change agents are the experts in their own lives, and as such, we feel it is their discretion if we are to be welcomed into a space. In that, we also acknowledge the importance of allowing the community to set the pace for interactions, allowing trust to grow naturally over time without pressure, and for our authenticity to be demonstrated over time; rather than simply articulated.

An example of this person-centered approach is through the creation and implementation of our Beams to Bridges program. In Steel Smiling’s early days, our founder, Julius Boatwright, was conducting “listening tours” with local Black leaders to get a better pulse on mental health needs across the region. Through these connections, Mr. Boatwright began to organically establish rapport with several grassroots leaders across the city, with many of them being in South Pittsburgh’s Hilltop neighborhoods. Mr. Boatwright and the community change agents began to develop a shared vision of how the Black Mental Health Ecosystem (BMHE) could be expanded and improved upon, based on the invaluable feedback collected from residents. Upon review of the information gathered during the listening tour, Steel Smiling sought to create a curriculum to dismantle stigma, educate community members about mental health and wellness, pass referrals to mental health clinicians, and seek to create a spark for those residents wanting to enter this field of employment. With the community-identified needs in mind, Steel Smiling developed the BTB curriculum to democratize mental health and wellness, and build multiple “on-ramps” for Black residents desiring to connect to the sector. In partnership with the grassroots, community change agents, we launched our first pilot of BTB in the Hilltop, with an enormous wave of interest because of the impacts of word-of-mouth advertising in the neighborhood. Fast forward four years later and we are even more deeply embedded into the Hilltop communities than ever before. We have graduated two cohorts of BTB participants (with residents from the Hilltop and Wilkinsburg), and both graduating classes are eager to engage and share their talents and knowledge with the world. Our graduates now share their system knowledge, expertise and talents with residents in their own sphere of influence, lending their trust in Steel Smiling to each referral we receive. Authentic, person-centered engagement is at the crux of our organizational approach and we believe it is critical for true healing and liberation to transpire at scale; otherwise, we are all simply advancing harm reduction within harmful, predatory, capitalistic systems.

The BTB program is set to launch again in late Q4. This time, however, we will be deploying a new iteration of the program, in partnership with two partners who are community-based organizations: Kingsley Association in Larimer and Center of Life in Hazelwood. As the program redesign is still in its finalization stage, more details will be forthcoming. However, we can share that we are interested in creating multiple “tracks” for Beams to Bridges, to adjust the density of the content, contingent upon the desires and aspirations of the individuals.

Organizational Philosophy

Steel Smiling is a mental health intermediary entity that seeks to provide access, on-ramps, and opportunity for local Black people to access culturally-reflective services. We believe that mental health care should be democratized, person-centered, trauma-informed, and reflective of the needs of the individual. Steel Smiling recognizes that the traditional mental health system is often bureaucratic, heavily guided by for-profit motives and therefore disconnected from its true purpose, and possesses a nebulous history of perpetuating harm. As such, Steel Smiling seeks to forge a different path for the Black community members we center, and strives to dismantle the mystery around accessing the system. We do this by serving as broker, a concierge of services and a connector of the broader BMHE, and “walk alongside” residents as they traverse (or not) the often-complicated web of finding the appropriate mental health service(s), support(s) and/or resource(s).

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Organizational Demographics and Priority Communities

Steel Smiling and Neighborhood Allies are equally as invested in equitable hiring practices, as we are in the equitable resourcing and development of the sector. Our commitment to equity is grounded in being a leading change agent of equitable growth for the Pittsburgh region, which starts both in our own organization and in the neighborhoods we serve. From intentionally increasing the levels of diversity amongst our board and staff, to directing a majority of our investments and support towards Black-led organizations, MWDBE firms and communities of color, justice/equity/diversity/inclusion/accessibility is the driving force behind our work. We have reached a desired level of diversity in our staff that reflects the communities we focus our investments in – of our 24-person team, 46% identify as Black, 38% white, 8% Latino, and 8% Asian. (Please note that some team members self-identify as multiple races.) Our Board of Directors is similarly diverse. And as part of our commitment to equity, our full staff participates in quarterly training sessions focused on racial equity and mental health.

In regards to service area, Neighborhood Allies has established a ten-year commitment to low-income Pittsburghers residing in the the following priority neighborhoods: Hilltop, Hill District, Homewood, Wilksburg, Larimer and Millvale.

Steel Smiling, on the other hand, serves Black people in the broader Pittsburgh region. It is our preference to offer our services and programs in alignment with Neighborhood Allies' priority communities, as we are most equipped and resourced to do so with our mentor entity's additional supports in place. However, we do not share the ten-year commitment of our "parent" organization and thus, are not as stringently bound to those same neighborhoods.

Project Details (50 points possible)

Amplifying Steel Smiling's Community-based Mental Health Supports

Steel Smiling is proposing a multi-pronged approach that improves equity, access and on-ramps across the Black Mental Health Ecosystem.

As noted in the RFP, a priority goal for these resources is to "grow access within a community to 'informal'* helpers." Both of Steel Smiling's identified programs, BTB and BMHF, are poised to easily advance this objective. Through our BTB program, we intentionally cultivate psycho-education and advocacy/workforce development training for local, community-based helpers. Upon graduation from the program, the residents are equipped to:

1. Activate their existing social connections in neighborhoods to serve as referral partners.
2. Deploy their Mental Health First Aid training in instances of crisis (and to support preventative care) in the community.
3. Serve as grassroots advocates in the fight against mental health stigma (which is sometimes persistent in Black culture).

Additionally, Steel Smiling "cross-pollinates" our programs in that we activate our BTB graduates to continue cultivating their skills and talents by providing community-based supports to the BMHF. For our BTB graduates interested in exploring the Mental Health sector as a possible career path, these opportunities are paramount for residents to encounter experiential learning.

Through the facilitation (and co-facilitation) of the community-based peer-support groups, our BTB graduates continue to refine and develop their interpersonal skills, grow their resumes and continue to build their knowledge base; allowing these residents to be impactful, change agents in their own neighborhoods and in these peer support groups. Through this award, we would like to:

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a.) fund a portion of our staff salaries to ensure the sustainability and success of this Black-led, Black peer support initiative, b.) ensure that several BTB graduates from past cohorts (1 and 2) have the opportunity to secure their own Peer Certification credential. We also recognize that working for our organization as a Consultant (1099) is likely different from past employment history community members may have had. As such, we will also advise that our BTB graduates make appointments with one of our sister programs operated through Neighborhood Allies' Economic Opportunity department and the City of Pittsburgh, Financial Empowerment Centers. These free services (if accepted by our BTB graduates) would help our residents with financial planning and savings goals related to having to pay a higher percentage on Consultant wages at tax time.

The cross-pollination of Steel Smiling programming also has significant, meaningful impacts for the residents coming through the BMHF initiative. Broadening our capacity by tapping our BTB graduates to lead peer-support groups with the support of our Program Managers has heightened access for Black community members to participate in community-based supports (in addition to more traditional, clinical based services and resources) while they wait for a matching clinician (or if the resident prefers to remain outside of formal systems entirely). Steel Smiling is also graciously requesting replenishment dollars to the BMHF as a component of this award, as we recognize the importance of both immediate and more long term interventions. While we recognize that the BMHF is merely a "bandaid" and temporary measure for such a disjointed and broken system, it has had immediate, life-changing rewards for the residents it has served.

Steel Smiling's longer-term plans to improve the BMHE include:

a.) Establishing a coalition of Black-led, Black-centered organizations focused on advancing Black mental health and wellness; b.) Work within the coalition to address Pittsburgh's longstanding, notable challenges with retaining Black talent in our region (particularly in the mental health arena); c.) Work within the coalition and universities on retention plans for Black talent d.) Build capacity and support for culturally-responsive clinicians, private-practices, and other small-businesses who support the BMHE; e.) Endow the BMHF.

*A note on language: Steel Smiling takes the approach of using strengths-based language throughout our person-centered interactions; thus, we found the proposal's repeated use of "informal" (to indicate "outside of the traditional mental health system") to be problematic and inconsistent with our own internal communications. We have instead opted to use "community-based," or "grassroots" in lieu of the term shared by the RFP. For our team, the term "informal" indicates "less than" and has an "othering" feel to its usage. Mental health and wellness is not meant to be held in ivory towers or systems alone; it is meant to find its spark in every individual who chooses to look within. It is meant to be democratized and not gate-kept for those who have most access to privilege, resources, and/or services.

Another important aspect of illuminating this problematic, othering language is the lack of acknowledgement around the historical context of its necessity. Throughout American history, society and institutions repeatedly and consciously denied Black people access-to and meaningful-participation-in systems. The commanding grip that racism has held over Black people over the past hundreds of years has essentially forced a circumstance where Black people needed to develop independent societal structures, outside of White America's pervasive systems and harmful reach. Clearly, this chasm caused by the racial vestiges of the past is still present with us today as there often exists a justifiable discontentment with and mistrust of broader systems within Black communities. Without ownership of past wrongdoings and an effort to rectify some of the historical, egregious injustices, the larger traditional mental health system will struggle to build authentic connection with community members who require their pain to be validated in order to move forward.

Project Location(s) and Substantiation

Remaining consistent with Steel Smiling's commitment to the region's Black community members, the organization will serve locals seeking mental health services. We will do so by acknowledging the role race can and often does play in healing relationships, and hold space

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for residents to seek those resources. We help community members navigate the mental health system in a proactive, person-centered approach.

In accordance with Steel Smiling's efforts to "meet community members where they are" and honor the specific needs of individuals, our programs will persist in a hybrid fashion indefinitely. Due to COVID-19, our services were all pushed online in 2020. While we know this model will always be preferred by some residents who perhaps have challenging schedules, transportation barriers; we also heard from other residents the importance of "in-person" connection and how much they missed having those touch points. Answering the call for "no-set-pathways", Steel Smiling formalized partnerships with two place-based community-based organizations to host these opportunities to connect within trusted, embedded neighborhood centers. These relationships evolved organically over time and continue to grow and deepen.

Steel Smiling will make in-person services available through our place-based community-based partners, Kingsley Association and Center of Life. Through our partnership with the Kingsley Association, community center space will be designated and held for our peer-support groups. There will also be opportunities for residents to have a one-on-one mental health check in with a professional, on an as-needed basis. Through our partnership with the Center of Life, we will continue collaborating with their Social Work, Development, and Family Support team members. These three staff departments will meet with Steel Smiling team members on a monthly basis to further strengthen our standing, collaborative mental health efforts. We will strategize with each other to determine when it's most appropriate and beneficial to launch our Beams to Bridges (BTB) Workforce Development Program with a select number of Center of Life program participants. Since this collaboration has been active for approximately one year, we have already jointly identified a few potential BTB program participants. Additionally, one of Steel Smiling's program graduates from our BTB 1 training group is already ingrained into the current mental health "Chill Sessions" at Center of Life. ("Chill Sessions" are a co-created mental health program designed by both of our organizations to support community members in Hazelwood.) This BTB 1 program graduate will be given the opportunity to continue serving as a co-facilitator as future mental health programming evolves at Center of Life.

Essential Partnerships for Project Success

Fortunately for Steel Smiling, we are already deeply invested in the immense value of partnerships for facilitating collective action around Black Mental Health and Wellness. As such, we have standing relationships with several trusted partners that will feed these outlined efforts over the next two years. Notably, we have established formal partnerships with the Kingsley Association and Center of Life. We also have our formal, Organization-in-Residence partnership with Neighborhood Allies. As noted above, the pilot project allows Steel Smiling to grow and scale our organization's capacity over the next three years through thoughtful resource-sharing, social and human capital sharing, risk mitigation, strategic guidance from our mentoring entity and other organizational supports such as communications and accounting services. The OIR model is a co-created project of both our organizations intended to scale and support nascent nonprofits of color.

In addition to Steel Smiling's formal alignments, we maintain a host of informal partnerships with a variety of Black mental health professionals and advocates to support our referral process through the BMHF. As Steel Smiling continues to scale and grow, we intend to formalize partnerships with clinicians in our referral pool to streamline and strengthen the process and outcomes for residents. Additionally, Steel Smiling is working to strategically strengthen relationships with traditional mental health spaces who can provide our referrals with culturally-sensitive case management and blended service coordination support.

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How Steel Smiling Envisions DHS' Participation

Both Steel Smiling and Neighborhood Allies, use a matrix tool called a “Partnership Analysis,” to assess the “appropriateness of fit” with any possible external, strategic alignment being considered. This internal resource allows us to quickly and easily assess the alignment (or lack thereof) of shared mission, values, and methods across our organizations, as we know this is paramount to success in transformative vs. transactional activities. Steel Smiling also acknowledges that collaboration, authenticity and transparency have been essential pillars in our success, and as such, we always strive to embody those values. Our team also sets the expectation that engagement with our organization necessitates the same level of respect and reciprocity. True, meaningful, community work cannot be set to or held to stringent timelines, as much as our profit-driven world would like it to be. It requires “breathing room” or time “to process.” This is not to say estimates or best guesses cannot be provided, but it is meant to illuminate the fluidity of this work. Genuine community engagement is an incredibly delicate art that often does not receive its due credit nor appreciation in our sector. This type of high-impact work requires thoughtfulness and time, demonstrable trust, and cannot be coerced to move in a linear fashion. To this end, Steel Smiling would like to set the expectation that we will require grace, patience and understanding, due to the organic nature of this undertaking. As much as our organization can try to “determine pathways,” or find solutions, we are always beholden first and foremost to the expressed wants and needs of the residents we serve. Thus, you will find Steel Smiling avoids prescriptive or paternalistic approaches to this work, and asserts the belief that “there are many pathways to the same destination” when it comes to healing. We require partners who are of the same respectful and understanding stance.

As for system-change related to this proposal, Steel Smiling envisions an alignment between DHS and our organization to “push” the traditional mental healthcare system together into “less harmful structures”. The release of this RFP from DHS indicates the system’s acknowledgement of the necessity of change, as well as an opportunity to grow, and to forge a new trail. Steel Smiling strives to promote person-centered approaches that “meet the people where they are,” instead of always demanding community members meet systems and institutions on their own terms. We are hopeful that DHS will take the time to understand this vision and galvanize support to make person-centered mental healthcare a reality in our region, even if that means push back from larger healthcare institutions. Is the goal for “consumers” (in capitalistic, transactional language) to pay insurance premiums or is the goal for community members to heal and live their fullest, most actualized versions of themselves? No matter what we tell ourselves about our world and our current systems - even if we like them - those two things certainly are not mutually exclusive; however they are at odds far too often than the system acknowledges.

Project Timeline

This proposal is for two years - dating Fall 2022 through Fall 2024 (exact dates determined upon contract signing). We are staffed and organized to start work on the contract immediately upon award. We will concurrently be delivering programs at several different levels. First and outside, but related to this project is to contract with a consultant to help Steel Smiling develop a formal partnership and assessment analysis tool on how we can properly partner with large healthcare institutions. This process is needed as part of the project because some of the questions related to insurance referrals, etc. as part of this proposal are also some of the same challenges faced by Steel Smiling as we begin to scale. We acknowledge that there is an enormous power differential between large entities and small, trust-based and community-rooted non-profits. We need to ensure that our networks are preserved, our organization is protected, along with our intellectual property, community members and their information are held to the highest standards, and their distrust and lack of existing participation or lack thereof

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is centered and honored as we begin to build in the informal supports for Black and brown individuals in Allegheny County.

Under our programming and more specifically, over the next two years, funding from this proposal would allow us the ability to:

1. **Black Mental Health Fund (BMHF):** Provide resourcing for copayments, psychiatric treatment and medications for existing and new community members who are currently waitlisted as we build in the additional monetary resources. By the end of the contract, we hope to continue to assess the BMHF usage and needs and adjust our programming to meet community members where they are.
2. **BTB Programming:** By year end of 2022, we plan to launch a third cohort of peer-training in BTB3. We will continue to build out this program model and are currently about 75% finished with a new curriculum model that will allow this program to continue to reach scale over the next two years. Additionally, we plan to launch and implement two community-based service models at Kingsley Association and Center of Life.
3. Additionally, the Steel Smiling program graduates from both BTB 1 and BTB 2, will begin executing on their official scopes of work to support the community-based supports. These community members will serve as consultants who provide mental health support services such as: psycho-education/support group co-facilitation, peer group session development, behavioral health referrals, and ongoing programmatic recommendations.

Project Staffing

Steel Smiling will engage the following staff members to execute on the work outlined in this proposal:

1. Julius Boatwright, Founder, Managing Director
2. Caitlyn Lee, Operations Director
3. Robin Sheffey, Program Manager for Wellness Services
4. Courtney Abegunde, Program Manager for Implementation and Evaluation

Consultants:

- Rakeem Collins and Shanell Ware, Hilltop Community Members, Supporting the BMHF
 - Two BTB graduates are already actively engaged in this program. They are aware of Steel Smiling's desire to secure resources for their time, and have thus far chosen to volunteer "instead of waiting for funding to come through) because of their immense passion and dedication. While Steel Smiling is infinitely grateful for the time these residents have shared, we feel strongly that all people who engage with our organization should be paid appropriately for their services. Thus, we are graciously requesting that some of the award dollars go towards retaining these two community experts in the BMHE, in addition to several other graduates who remain equally as interested in exploring this career avenue.
- Dr. Raymond Logan and Rick Bigelow, BTB Programmatic Instruction and Support
- Dr. Jennifer Madden, Leverage Point Development, Strategic Planning and Program Design

Neighborhood Allies will engage the following staff members to execute on the work outlined in this proposal:

Senior Leadership Team:

1. Presley Gillespie, President
2. Stephanie Chernay, Chief Operating Officer
3. Violet Graham, Controller

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Other Internal Support:

1. Talia DePasquale, Director of Communications and Storytelling
2. Chelsea Contino Eichner, Communications and Outreach Program Manager
3. Benjamin Emswiler, Executive Assistant and Office Manager

The activation of these grant dollars, if awarded, would enable Steel Smiling to best resource our existing team (staff and programmatic consultants), grow our pool of programmatic consultants directly from our Beams to Bridges graduate pool further building out the local Black Mental Health Ecosystem and deepening our reach with residents.

Community Involvement and Trust (30 points possible)

Community Participation in Planning and Design

At the time of submission, Steel Smiling is currently undertaking a Program Redesign effort with our trusted national consultant, Dr. Jennifer Madden. Both of our BTB graduates (Cohorts 1 and 2) participated in focus groups to inform the next iteration of program curriculum, offerings and other services. Steel Smiling acknowledges that a person-centered training program must always be iterative and responsive to community needs. As an ally and resource navigator for Pittsburgh's Black community, it is Steel Smiling's role to pivot and continually update our curriculum to ensure best practices are being implemented.

We also endeavor to replenish the BMHF, as this program is highly utilized by community members, yet remains under-resourced. It is important to note that the BMHF was serendipitously born at the height of the COVID-19 outbreak and the seething societal racial tensions surrounding the Derek Chauvin trial. Since the inception of the BMHF, Steel Smiling has been striving to implement controlled, manageable growth around the fund, but have been unable to sustain the demand. While resident feedback continues to help us with program processes and refinement, many systemic barriers remain that present challenges for our team. With a large infusion of resources into the fund, it frees our team from the continuous, immediate fundraising loop and to then pivot our focus towards the long-term strategy and sustainability of such an endeavor. At present, we are considering multiple possible avenues, such as but not limited to the possibility of an endowment and/or a capital campaign.

Community Participation in Implementation and Assessment

As noted above, our BTB graduates remain integral to our programming, even after they have completed the curriculum. Again, some of our BTB grads are grassroots community members who will be serving as facilitators and peer support specialists for Steel Smiling's community-based, peer support groups. BTB graduates will also have the ability to confidently serve as advocates within their own families and spheres of influence, which is a key component of our efforts to dismantle stigma within Black communities. These graduates will also be able to provide other community members with referrals to therapists, psychiatrists and other mental health supports.

Steel Smiling's Appropriateness of Fit

Steel Smiling is the only organization of its kind in our region, and likely, in the nation; we are a mental health-focused entity, incubating within a community development intermediary organization. This unique organizational structure facilitated through the OIR is perfectly poised to examine the intersections of many systems and to center the Social Determinants of Health (DOH) of the communities we serve. Often, this transpires through the cross-pollination of our

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programs, initiatives and ecosystems. The OIR structure also allows for Steel Smiling to make connections in the BMHE, build capacity, and to direct and/or share resources to the system. Thus, equipping and funding Steel Smiling sufficiently will bring in a wave of capacity for our formal and informal partners in the BMHE, as our own tide rises.

Steel Smiling is also invested in collective action in the local mental health sector. We do not seek to ever “own” or “monopolize” this work, nor be the “gatekeepers” or “arbiters” of what is allowable vs. not for Black Mental Health. Additionally, as an organization, we choose not to “compete” with partners, and have chosen instead, a collaborative stance. We are never in competition nor working from a “fear-based, resource-scarcity mindset” - when one of us succeeds, it is a win for the entire BMHE. Steel Smiling aspires to be the concierge or broker of resources to residents, a connector and collaborator for peer organizations and an advocate and educator to the general public. Steel Smiling believes that any organization advancing important, healing work in the BMHE is explicitly aligned with our mission, and therefore of “no threat” to efforts we are seeking to advance. We envision a near future when our peers and collaborators are resourced sufficiently so that all Black residents in our region may have the access that is desired to seek appropriate mental health supports.

Data Collection and Reporting (10 points possible)

Current Data Collection Efforts

Steel Smiling tracks our impact at the programmatic level and in the aggregate for the entire organization. We also coordinate and integrate our data collection with our OIR partner, Neighborhood Allies. A number of tools are used to track programmatic impact such as grant reports, surveys, client feedback and tracking sheets.

As it pertains to the BMHF, we have multiple data points we collect from program participants such as: name, phone number, email address, reason for seeking treatment, preferences for service delivery, insurance (if applicable), diagnoses, race, pronouns, and referral source. This information is critical for our matchmaking services so the community member is poised to receive the available mental health resources most aligned with their individual needs. For our partner organizations and clinicians in the BMHF, we track the number of referrals going to these entities, the tally of monies rendered for their services, and the amount of dollars the receive from the BMHF (some community members only require/request the matchmaking aspect of the BMHF and do not utilize the available subsidy.)

As it pertains to our BTB program, program participants complete the Mental Health Literacy Scale before and after participation. The Mental Health Literacy Scale is a 35-item self-report scale that assesses attributes of Mental Health Literacy including assessment of attitudes related to mental health, recognition of mental health disorders, how to seek help, knowledge of risk factors, self treatment techniques, and knowledge of professional help (O'Connor & Casey, 2015). As Steel Smiling continues to improve the BTB curriculum, we will use results to inform our approach with a goal to demonstrate the program's significant impact on Black Mental Health Literacy.

Additionally, BTB program participants complete Personal Interview Questions at various points throughout the course of their program experience. The 14-question document was created in collaboration with faculty from the University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work and Allegheny HealthChoices, Inc. The purpose of this tool is to measure how thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes about mental health advocacy/treatment change over time as participants matriculate through

RFP for Community-Led and Community-Operated Informal Mental Health Supports

our BTB program. Past data from previous cohorts show that program participants develop a more active and positive sense of belonging in their community as they make progress through the program. For example, participants were noted as referencing their community/neighborhood in the past tense before engaging in BTB. As they complete courses and build stronger relationships with their peers in the group, participants started referencing their community/neighborhood in the present/future tense. This change in language showed a strengths-based mindset shift that's necessary to stabilize and thrive when it comes to mental health and wellness.

As demonstrated above, Steel Smiling has the resources to immediately implement data collection procedures as required by DHS. Steel Smiling has the capacity to incorporate DHS ClientPath reporting, and to expand our historical efforts. Steel Smiling is committed to best practices with both quantitative and qualitative means to program evaluation that informs our approaches and enables us to tell rich stories of impact. Steel Smiling is growing our data collection practices to be more efficient in collection and reporting. Funding from DHS will enable us to appropriately resource our collection and reporting process, and to develop a data management system that will ensure the sustainability of these efforts.

Determining Project Success and Effectiveness

Steel Smiling has a multitude of mechanisms for determining effectiveness of our various initiatives. Notably, we assess community member engagement as a primary indicator of success across both BTB and the BMHF. As noted previously, there persists an understandable, pervasive distrust of systems within some Black communities; therefore, heightened engagement on Steel Smiling's behalf indicates a level of trust established with residents and the community members' desire to challenge stigma. Increase in referrals numbers could also indicate a ripple effect, whereby community members share their experiences with mental health supports, sparking an interest in their immediate spheres of influence. We have had one such instance occur already where a BMHF participant shared that speaking with a mental health professional and how it improved their quality of life. We will also be able to gauge the success of this program by its ability to scale and its ability to retain the community-based talent in the BMHE that we have equipped through the BTB program.

Another component of our funding request is related to the development and implementation of a planning document to help Steel Smiling safely engage with large healthcare institutions that have immense imbalances of resources and power. To date, the proposed interactions with these types of entities have mostly been top-down, profit-driven and structured within a narrow, limited understanding of mental health and wellness, and the sectors' broader needs to better serve Black communities. The successful implementation of this Health Institution Analysis will also be an indicator of success. We recognize that some of the community members we serve **want** access to the traditional mental health systems, and as such, it is our role to work with those institutions to facilitate a positive, sustainable experience for local Black people. However, we cannot and will not partner with entities that repeatedly violate the values we hold dear, and those organizations who demonstrate that their efforts with Steel Smiling are transactional rather than transformational.

These funds will also help us work toward successfully training 75 Community Mental Health Advocates through our workforce development program by Q2 of 2024. Therefore, another measure of success will be that we have 75 BTB Program Graduates affiliated with and connected to at least 5 different non-profit partner agencies within our focus neighborhoods.

RFP for Community-Led and Community-Operated Informal Mental Health Supports

Budget (10 points possible)

See below for budget details

Budget Narrative

If awarded, Steel Smiling will activate these resources to meet both immediate and long-term needs within the local Black Mental Health Ecosystem. For the purposes of this proposal, we are only including Total Project Sources and Uses for this Grant; however, Steel Smiling currently has 4FT staff and a program budget of roughly \$750,000 annually. This proposal reflects both supportive staff and direct financial support to the informal ecosystem and smaller Black and brown led-clinicians, program participants, and consultants. This grant will allow Steel Smiling to scale to existing, community-based peer support services, better resource our community partnerships with two, critical place-based organizations. The budget is structured to support roughly $\frac{1}{3}$ of our internal direct and indirect staffing costs, $\frac{1}{3}$ to expand and deepen the B2B programming model, as well as $\frac{1}{3}$ to the Black Mental Health Fund and its necessary components (therapy, psychiatry, medication copay supports). Additionally, the budget also includes a 20% administration fee that is above and beyond staffing costs - these fees cover overhead, financial monitoring and due diligence, and the hard costs associated with HR related benefits, as well as equity and human centered trainings for our staff and consultants. Additionally, planning dollars (\$45,000) in year 1 have been allocated for the evaluation and partnership/power tool to assess how we appropriately partner with large-scale healthcare institutions, while holding our mission-based values front-and-center. We have also allocated \$25,000 per contract year to review data collection software and to better understand how we work within the County's ClientPath platform.

Steel Smiling's Community Mental Health Worker Program
DHS Proposal Community-Led Informal Mental Health Supports - Submitted Budget
Contract Year - 2022 - 2024

SOURCES				
		Year 1	Year 2	
DHS: Community-Led Informal Mental Health Supports		\$ 335,000.00	\$ 315,000.00	
Total SOURCES over Two Years		\$ 650,000.00		
USES				
		Year 1	Year 2	
Steel Smiling/Neighborhood Allies Staff Time		\$ 75,000.00	\$ 75,000.00	Blended support for Steel Smiling staff: Executive Director, Operations Director and Program Manager for Wellness Services, and Program Manager for Evaluation and Implementation
BTB Program Support		\$ 75,000.00	\$ 75,000.00	Consultant fees, emergency financial assistance for cohort members, stipends for program participation, workforce development stipends (no less than \$15 per hour per participant - plan is to really mirror formal salaries of Peer Support Specialist and those hourly wages average between \$16-\$17 per hour), peer certification credentialing - Mostly for the development of Peer Supported Groups - built by graduates.
Event and Meeting Support		\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	Materials and events for program participants
Steel Smiling - Black Mental Health Fund		\$ 50,000.00	\$ 75,000.00	Includes Clinical Services and Copays, Psychiatric Services, Medication Coverage for program participants, contingency costs (cancellation fees for no-show appointments)
Planning Evaluation		\$ 45,000.00		Planning Evaluation/Risk understanding of Partnership and Data Sharing with Healthcare Institutions
Data Management Systems		\$ 25,000.00	\$ 25,000.00	Data Evolution Tools and Tracking Development and Software/Partnering with Client Portal
Marketing and Communications		\$ 10,000.00	\$ 10,000.00	Yearly marketing and communication support for program participants, as well as program support to better understand how to provide language assistance help in our work.
Administrative Costs		\$ 50,000.00	\$ 50,000.00	
	SUBTOTAL	\$ 335,000.00	\$ 315,000.00	
	Total USES over TWO YEARS	\$ 650,000.00		

Letter of Support

To Whom It May Concern:

This is a letter of support for the Steel Smiling, the Kingsley Association, Macedonia FACE, and Center of Life partnership. The purpose of the collaboration is to develop an enhanced sense of agency and self-determination by building internal capacity and infrastructure supporting the Black community's collective mental health and well-being processes.

This collective community effort is related to the social determinants of health, as described by The World Health Organization, and the Centers for Disease control. These are "the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, learn, work, play and age that affect a wide range of health and quality-of life-risks and outcomes...These circumstances are shaped by the distribution of money and power within our national and local communities. Social determinants of health are mostly responsible for health inequities – the unfair and avoidable differences in health status seen between social (and racial) groups."

Addressing local social determinants of mental health through your financial support enhances Black nonprofits' internal infrastructure and capacity that have significant impacts on mental health outcomes of Black community members. The lack of financial resources greatly hinders mental health self-determination.

The pandemic of Covid- 19 has highlighted the lack of national financial, institutional social, and other supports for people of color, and Black people in particular. This is evidenced by the high mortality rates of this population. For the past 400 years, the United States has imposed social conditions which have had adverse impacts on the Black community. The hindrances to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" have been ongoing challenges for the Black community and continue to actively do so. The recent social movement to "make America great again", voter suppression, legislative and judicial interference in women's individual health choices are recent examples of adverse social determinants of health. At this point in our nation's history, it is important that the Black community increase an internal sense of agency and self-determination as much as possible.

Within this context and the larger context of the United States' race-conscious culture, the funding of the mental health collaborative involving the aforementioned agencies will provide an important foundation of support within the Black community for self-directed social determinants of health.

With Blessings and Strong Support,

Raymond C. Logan, PhD



August 5, 2022

Erin Dalton, Director
Allegheny County Department of Human Services
Human Services Building
One Smithfield Street, Fourth Floor
Pittsburgh, PA 15222

RE: RFP Letter of Support – Steel Smiling / Neighborhood Allies

Director Dalton:

I am pleased to provide a letter of support for the Steel Smiling / Neighborhood Allies Informal Mental Health Support Ecosystem.

As you know, HHS and SAMSHA have reported alarming increases in rates of depression, substance use, and suicidality within Black communities. More concerning is Black Americans often receive poorer quality treatment and diminished accessibility to culturally competent care for their mental health issues. A SAMSHA national survey showed nearly 70% of Black respondents failed to receive treatment and for those who do seek mental health services, are less likely to receive evidence-based recommendations, are more likely to experience paternalistic and domineering communication by clinicians, and are at increased risk for misdiagnosis compared to other ethnoracial groups.

Now more than ever the services provided by Steel Smiling are critical for Allegheny County and I strongly support the continuation of their work in the Informal Mental Health Support Ecosystem. As a strategist, researcher, teacher, facilitator, and design thinker providing strategic planning, resource development, technical assistance, and capacity building – I have worked with Steel Smiling since 2020 and Neighborhood Allies since 2014. This work is providing sustained transformational change for Allegheny County, continues to be critical, impactful and necessary.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JRMadden', is positioned above the typed name.

Jennifer R. Madden, PhD, MNO, CFE
President

*Management Design Fellow
Fowler Sustainability Fellow
Nonprofit Management Research Fellow
2022 & 2020 John A. Yankey Outstanding Master of Nonprofit Organizations Teacher of the Year*



*Making a positive difference for youth and
community is our crowning achievement.*

August 5, 2022

To Whom It May Concern:

Please accept this letter as official notification of The Kingsley Association's desire to support Steel Smiling in their application to the Department of Human Services to become an Informal Mental Health Support.

Our organization has been fortunate enough to secure grant funding from Neighborhood Allies in partnership with Steel Smiling to support teens, adults, seniors, and staff in their quest for mental health education and resources. Throughout the process we have experienced an incredibly positive working relationship with the staff and are excited to begin offerings and services to the community at large. Other mental health agencies have openly praised the work done by Steel Smiling, and we look forward to the joint impact that we can have as a team in the near future.

In closing, The Kingsley Association highly recommends Steel Smiling in their request for funding from DHS.

Sincerely,

Dexter Hairston

Executive Director

The Kingsley Association



staunton farm foundation

Behavioral Health: It's More Than You Think

August 7, 2022

To Whom It May Concern:

I am pleased to write this Letter of Support for Steel Smiling. I first met Julius Boatwright of Steel Smiling in the summer of 2017 with roughly \$19,000 in operating funds, but with an impactful vision that would bring mental health literacy, awareness and reduce the stigma to the region's black community. I lived in this region my entire life and am aware of racial discrimination and the inequalities that still exist today for people of color while living in this region. This small but mighty organization saw the opportunity to educate, teach self-care, and change the conversation in the black community. The more a person can heal within, the better this person can be for their family, and community. In real-time, I have watched this organization flourish and impact the community it set out to serve.

Since 2017, Staunton Farm Foundation has believed in this organization and recognized the inequalities in the Southwestern PA region, especially Allegheny County, when serving people of color. Services have always existed, but organizations like Steel Smiling have built rapport/ trust in the communities they serve, are culturally competent/ responsive, and live and work in the communities they serve. I have read narratives of the impact Steel Smiling has made in the black community. Steel Smiling is not afraid to go into communities with higher rates of poverty and violence to do their programming. They look like the communities they serve and are well established in the black community, not only amongst community members but mental health providers and other social service agencies. These agencies and organizations look to Steel Smiling as an intermediary in navigating people into needed services. They have always met people where they are, literally.

The Staunton Farm Foundation has invested \$297,600 since 2017 for building out their signature program, Beam to Bridges, building capacity within the organization to deliver services due to demand, and supporting the creation of the Black Mental Health Fund. Staunton Farm Foundation has partnered with Steel Smiling since its first year of creation. This organization has been one of the most rewarding, seeing it grow fast while remaining true to its vision and the community it set out to serve.

My contact information is below if you need more information or have any questions. Thank you for considering Steel Smiling!

Sincerely,

Bethany Hemingway
Staunton Farm Foundation
Sr. Program Officer

412-337-6121 (cell)

*Please note our address change is
401 Liberty Ave, Suite 2326
Pittsburgh, PA 15222

650 SMITHFIELD STREET, SUITE 210
PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA 15222

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