

DHS News

Newsletter of the Allegheny County
Department of Human Services



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DHS strengthens partnerships with local universities through RFQ process

Recently, DHS qualified a handful of local universities to participate in a university/government research partnership. The universities were selected through an RFQ process that was conducted last fall.

The RFQ sought qualified applicants who were interested in helping DHS understand, improve and evaluate local initiatives, and offered potential partner universities access to DHS resources, such as data, technical assistance and subject matter expertise. Five qualified universities were selected in November 2018.

“As DHS and our data warehouse have grown, we’ve seen the number of collaboration requests from outside groups increase,” said Peter Jhon, analyst in the Office of Analytics, Technology and Planning (ATP). “By implementing these partnerships with universities, we hope to be better stewards of data; provide more meaningful context to our data; and to create longer-term, structured relationships with educational institutions.”

Since the qualification process, representatives from the selected universities have participated in two steering committee meetings to discuss research priorities as well as skills and resources available at their respective universities. Future meetings will focus on finding mutually aligned interests and prospective projects to encourage collaboration not only with the department, but also with other partner universities.

Peter adds, “Although the work that will be done with the qualified universities will organize some of DHS's larger research collaborations, it is not the end-all be-all of relationships with outside groups; the ‘side doors’ of individual partnerships and relationships are not closing. These structured partnerships are just a larger framework for DHS to work in as we continue to find ways to best serve Allegheny County residents.”

To learn more about the university partnerships, contact Peter at peter.jhon@alleghenycounty.us.