



Allegheny County Department of Human Services

# Request for Proposals

## Homelessness Continuum of Care (CoC) Strategic Planning Consultant

**RFP Posting:**

Thursday, March 21, 2024

**Office Hours:**

11:30 a.m. Eastern Time on Thursday, April 4, 2024

**Questions Deadline:**

3 p.m. Eastern Time on Friday, April 19, 2024

**Submission Deadline:**

3 p.m. Eastern Time on Thursday, May 2, 2024

**Estimated Award Decision/Notification:**

June 2024

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

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# Acronyms and Definitions

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

1. Agreement: A contract negotiated between Allegheny County and the Successful Proposer to provide the Contract Services
2. Allegheny County: A home rule county and political subdivision of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
3. Bonfire: The County's online procurement software. Proposers must have a Bonfire account to submit a Response to this RFP.
4. Continuum of Care (CoC): A geographically based group of representatives that carries out the planning responsibilities of the HUD Continuum of Care Program
5. CoC Regulations: HUD's rules and regulations under the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing Act of 2009 (HEARTH Act). The rules and regulations are titled, "Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing: Continuum of Care Program; Interim Final Rule," and can be found at 24 CFR Part 578.
6. Contract Services: The specific services that the Successful Proposer agrees to provide to the County in response to this RFP as more particularly described in the Scope of Services in the Agreement
7. DHS: [Allegheny County] Department of Human Services
8. DHS Bonfire Portal: A Bonfire webpage specific to Allegheny County Department of Human Services where Proposers can view open, past and awarded solicitations released through Bonfire
9. HAB: [Allegheny County] Homeless Advisory Board, the working board that acts on behalf of the CoC. The HAB sets the local strategy to end homelessness and reviews public policy, programs, activities, data and all other efforts to prevent and end homelessness and improve the well-being of individuals and families experiencing homelessness.
10. HMIS: Homeless Management Information System, an information technology system used to collect client-level data and data on the provision of housing and services to homeless individuals and families and people at risk of homelessness
11. Proposal: A completed Response Form, with specified attachments, submitted in response to this RFP
12. Proposer: The individual, non-profit organization, or for-profit organization or business submitting a Proposal in response to this RFP
13. Response Form: The Word document in which Proposers respond to requested information about this RFP
14. RFP: Request for Proposals
15. RFP Opportunity Page: The Bonfire webpage where the RFP and all supporting documents are listed and where the RFP submission documents must be uploaded for a Proposal to be considered for review
16. Successful Proposer: The Proposer(s) selected by the County to provide the Contract Services

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

# The RFP at a Glance

## *Purpose*

Allegheny County, through its Department of Human Services (DHS), and on behalf of the Homelessness Advisory Board (HAB) of the Allegheny County Continuum of Care (CoC), is seeking Proposals from qualified Proposers for a consultant to lead a community planning process that will result in an updated strategic plan to guide CoC in its efforts to prevent and end homelessness.

The CoC is the community-based homeless services planning network, organized to carry out the responsibilities under the CoC Program Interim Rule.<sup>1</sup> The CoC is governed by the [Homeless Advisory Board](#) (HAB), and its funding and day-to-day activities are administered by Allegheny County DHS.

In 2017, the CoC released a five-year [strategic plan](#) that articulated a vision and strategies to make homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring. The CoC's new strategic plan should reflect ongoing initiatives as well as current needs in Allegheny County as well as recent advancements in the fields of homelessness prevention and service delivery. We expect that, to be effective, the plan will distinguish between individuals and families experiencing homelessness and the operation of services to support them. Above all, the plan should be action-oriented, providing clear direction to help the CoC prioritize its activities and make the most effective use of available resources.

## *Award Details*

DHS intends to enter an agreement with one or more Successful Proposer(s) to perform the activities outlined in this RFP. The timeframe for the work will be finalized upon award, but we expect that the planning process will occur within a 12-month period and that we will receive the final plan by Summer 2025.

Proposers should provide a realistic cost estimate for carrying out a planning process that successfully results in the strategic plan. As detailed in Section 3 and the Response Form, proposers should provide a budget and budget narrative that will justify its cost estimate and help DHS understand assumptions behind the proposed budget. DHS will negotiate with the Successful Proposer(s) and agree upon a budget before a final award is made.

## *Who can submit a Proposal*

Anyone, including but not limited to non-profit organizations, for-profit organizations, small businesses and individuals, is eligible to submit a Proposal in response to this RFP. Proposers do not need to have an existing contract with Allegheny County to apply, but they must meet all of Allegheny County's contractual requirements (see Section 6: Contract Requirements for

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/2033/hearth-coc-program-interim-rule/>

Successful Proposers) and have the programmatic, financial and staffing capabilities and necessary expertise to provide the Contracted Services.

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

### ***What's important to us***

The strategic plan will focus on prioritizing objectives, action steps and resources rather than reestablishing the vision for the CoC. The plan should answer the following questions:

- 1) What evidence-based interventions, best practices and/or validated quality improvement measures are applicable to Allegheny County to further our goals of making homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring?
- 2) How can we make the best use of existing CoC resources to realize our objectives?
- 3) What resources and programs should we prioritize for future system growth?

To achieve an effective strategic plan for the CoC, we anticipate the Successful Proposer(s) will possess:

- Strong knowledge of the systems, programs, funding streams and partnerships that influence a community's ability to prevent, reduce and end homelessness. The consultant must be well-versed in the political and economic context surrounding homelessness and be able to identify how local CoC planning efforts align with current and anticipated priorities at the federal, state and local levels.
- An understanding of the current evidence about what works in the housing and homelessness fields, including population-specific best practices and innovations.
- Proven experience in successfully charting and leading a planning process that gains buy-in from diverse stakeholders and guides them in selecting a shared set of achievable priorities.
- Experience in identifying and weaving together funding sources from multiple systems. Allegheny County is particularly interested in effectively utilizing Medicaid dollars. Successful proposers should be aware of Pennsylvania's recent submission of a 1115 Waiver application to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and be experienced in guiding actionable steps for successfully combining funding for housing services.
- Excellent facilitation skills, including the ability to present information clearly, prevent and resolve conflicts, and build consensus.
- The ability to critically analyze, synthesize and prioritize data and information from a variety of both qualitative and quantitative sources.
- Exceptional writing skills and the ability to develop clear, concise plans.

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

### ***Timeline***

RFP Posting	Thursday, March 21, 2024
Office Hours (see section 4.1 for details)	Thursday, April 4 at 11:30 a.m. Eastern
Questions Deadline	Friday, April 19 at 3 p.m. Eastern
Last Website and Q&A Update	Thursday, April 25 at 6 p.m. Eastern
Submission Deadline	Thursday, May 2 at 3 p.m. Eastern
Estimated Award Decision/Notification	June 2024

***Who we are***

DHS is the largest department of Allegheny County government and provides publicly funded services to more than 200,000 people annually, in areas including child welfare, behavioral health, aging, developmental supports, homelessness and community services. More information about DHS is available at <http://www.alleghenycounty.us/human-services/index.aspx>

## **Section 1: Why We Are Issuing This RFP**

Over the past decade, Allegheny County’s poverty rate<sup>2</sup> has increased while, at the same time, affordable housing stock has declined. Citing 2015-2019 data from HUD’s Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy, the Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania reports that there are just 39 affordable rental units available for every 100 extremely low-income renters in Allegheny County and that this gap disproportionately impacts Black renters, who must spend a higher share of their income on rent.<sup>3</sup> Both the COVID-19 pandemic and inflation have exacerbated these challenges. In a community survey administered as part of Allegheny County’s [2021 Community Needs Assessment](#), rental and utility assistance was the second highest-ranked urgent need among respondents (housing ranked fourth out of the top ten critical needs).

These factors have contributed to a simultaneous increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness and a slowdown in the rate of people exiting the homeless system.<sup>4,5</sup> While the CoC has worked to increase the number of units available through its housing programs over the past decade,<sup>6</sup> successful outcomes have waned since the onset of the pandemic. Since 2019, the CoC has experienced increases in the average number of days from enrollment to move-in for permanent housing programs, decreases in the number of exits from permanent supportive housing programs, and increases in the percentage of households who return to homelessness within 24 months of exiting housing programs to what was believed to be a permanent destination.

<sup>2</sup> <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/PPAAPA42003A156NCEN>

<sup>3</sup> <https://housingalliancepa.org/resources/2023-county-fact-sheets/>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.alleghenycountyanalytics.us/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/23-ACDHS-04-PIT-Brief\\_v7.pdf](https://www.alleghenycountyanalytics.us/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/23-ACDHS-04-PIT-Brief_v7.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> The CoC increased shelter capacity during that timeframe with the opening of Second Avenue Commons, which was a factor in the increased number of sheltered individuals.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/coc/coc-housing-inventory-count-reports/>

The CoC is spearheading multiple efforts to address these challenges, many of which are already underway. These initiatives can be grouped into two broad categories: 1) Expanding supports to quickly get people housed, with particular emphasis on those experiencing unsheltered homelessness and those in emergency shelters; and 2) Expanding access to deeply affordable housing in the community. While these burgeoning efforts are expected to reduce homelessness by targeting the problems outlined above, alignment with broader system goals and resources is necessary to ensure their success.

An effective strategic planning process – one that gives clear and thoughtful direction to the CoC’s efforts – is vital to our ability to achieve the goal of making homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring.

## Section 2: What We Are Looking For

DHS is requesting Proposals from experienced consultants to lead a comprehensive community planning process that results in an updated strategic plan to guide the CoC’s efforts over the next five years.

### A. Service Description

The Successful Proposer will be expected to lead all aspects of the strategic planning process, working in close partnership with DHS and HAB leadership to ensure coordination and alignment with other ongoing CoC activities.

#### i. Designing the planning process

- Identifying data and information needed to inform the strategic planning process:
  - DHS will assist the Successful Proposer in accessing information and data from the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)<sup>7</sup> and the Allegheny County Data Warehouse pertaining to CoC supply, demand and system outcomes. We anticipate that the Successful Proposer will also be able to leverage existing analyses and publications. This includes national resources, evidenced experience from other communities, and local information, including but not limited to:
    - [2017-2022 Allegheny County Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness](#)
    - DHS Analytics for programs and populations experiencing homelessness, including three recent cohort analyses regarding [people experiencing unsheltered homelessness](#), [people using adult-only shelters](#) and [families using family shelters](#).

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<sup>7</sup> HMIS, or the Homeless Management Information System, is the information technology system used to collect client-level data and data on the provision of housing and services to homeless individuals and families and people at risk of homelessness

- HUD System Performance Metrics and [CoC System Performance Management](#)
- Stakeholder input gathered via CoC meetings, focus groups with housing program participants and a survey conducted by the Homeless Outreach Coordinating Committee (HOCC).
  - Designing inclusive strategies to engage and gather input from targeted stakeholder groups. (See subsections v and vi below for additional considerations regarding stakeholder engagement.)
  - Establishing a clear and feasible timeline for the planning process, with well-defined objectives and milestones.

**ii. Implementing the planning process**

- Identifying activities and investments that may optimize the homelessness system, including CoC efforts that are already underway.
- Benchmarking best/promising practices being implemented in comparable metropolitan areas throughout the county.
- Facilitating a broad array of stakeholder engagement activities and documenting participant input.
- Synthesizing and critically analyzing stakeholder input to establish a prioritized list of recommended actions that will move the CoC forward in making homelessness rare, brief and nonrecurring.
- Integrating system improvement initiatives into the planning process.

**iii. Producing an updated strategic plan**

- Drafting, and, as necessary, revising an action-oriented strategic plan that:
  - Articulates a shared vision, building upon and updating the vision and guiding principles outlined in the previous strategic plan
  - Integrates and acts upon system improvement initiatives
  - Sets clear, actionable and measurable goals and objectives
  - Prioritizes objectives and action steps in light of available resources
  - Delineates objectives within the direct purview of the CoC from those that will be led by partner systems
- The final strategic plan should be a camera-ready document that clearly and persuasively communicates the above concepts. The plan should incorporate relevant data and visuals to illustrate key ideas.

**iv. Engaging People with Lived Homeless Experience**

The Allegheny County CoC is committed to including people with lived experience in the planning, coordination and operation of a system that meets the needs of individuals and families experiencing homelessness. The COC recognizes the importance of lived expertise but, as in other systems, has struggled to successfully engage and sustain that involvement. The Successful Proposer(s) will incorporate best practices of equity, inclusion and accessibility to include people with lived experience in the strategic planning process, while also identifying action steps for the CoC to effectively integrate people with lived experience in its decision-making structure moving forward.



The consultant should ensure that all meetings or activities to engage people with lived experience are designed with awareness of the barriers that may hinder participation, such as non-traditional work schedules, limited access to transportation or childcare, device access, language and literacy accessibility, and the need for language interpretation services or disability accommodations. With support from DHS, the Successful Proposer will make a concerted effort to remove these barriers.

We recognize that authentically engaging people with lived experience to improve policy, services and systems can require skill sets that differ from those needs for other aspects of the strategic planning process. Proposers without existing expertise in engaging people with lived experience with homelessness are encouraged to partner with qualified individuals or organizations to help plan and facilitate such engagement. If using such a collaborative approach, the Proposal should clearly describe the partner, its qualifications and relevant experience, and its role in the strategic planning process.

**v. Engaging Stakeholders**

Diverse perspectives are key to creating a strategic plan that captures the needs and priorities of the community. The Successful Proposer will work closely with DHS and the HAB to identify and engage local stakeholders with relevant knowledge and experience to inform planning efforts. Stakeholders may include, but are not limited to, community members, service agencies, planning and advocacy bodies, and funders. When engaging stakeholders, DHS will collaborate with the Successful Proposer on the use of existing DHS engagement platforms, including DHS social media and [Allegheny Engage](#).

We recognize that relationships play an important role in stakeholder engagement and that certain aspects of community planning, such as focus groups or town halls, may be most successful if carried out by a trusted entity with deep roots in the community. Proposers based outside of Allegheny County are encouraged to partner with local qualified individuals or organizations to help plan and facilitate stakeholder engagement activities. If using this type of collaborative approach, the Proposal should clearly describe the partner, its qualifications and relevant experience, and its role in the strategic planning process.

**C. Timeline**

Proposers should present a one-year planning timeline including key milestones and deliverables. Upon selection, DHS will work with the Successful Proposer to finalize the timeline and communicate it to key stakeholders.

**D. Budget**

Proposers should provide a detailed line-item budget that reflects a realistic estimate of project costs, and a budget narrative that explains assumptions and how costs were calculated. DHS will

work with selected Proposer(s) to ensure that the final award amount(s) are appropriate to achieve the goals outlined in this RFP.

## Section 3: Proposal Requirements and Evaluation Criteria

DHS will evaluate Proposals based upon the evaluation criteria listed below. Proposers must address their qualifications in their Proposal by responding to the requested items or questions in the Response Form. Proposers should download and type their responses directly into the Response Form available on the Active Solicitations webpage at <https://solicitations.alleghenycounty.us/>. The maximum score that a Proposal can receive is 100 points, as outlined in the following sections.

### Experience (50 points possible)

- Organizational capacity, staffing and qualifications necessary to carry out the project. Please include resumes for all key personnel. (10 points)
- Experience designing and leading successful strategic planning projects similar in scope to the one proposed. Please provide your process for and approach to planning, examples of projects undertaken, how you generated buy-in and built consensus among stakeholders, and the results achieved. (20 points)
- Expertise in homelessness systems, including in-depth knowledge of the landscape of regulations and policies that govern them; their funding streams and programs; and their key stakeholders, decision-makers and partners (10 points)
- Current knowledge of evidence-based practices and emerging innovations for preventing and addressing homelessness in metropolitan areas comparable to Allegheny County (10 points)

### Project Plan (40 points possible)

- A comprehensive project plan that describes how you will carry out each of the service components described in Section A (20 points)
- Description of the anticipated deliverables and how they contribute to the outlined goals (10 points)
- A timeline of key project milestones and deliverables (10 points)

### Budget (10 points possible)

- A detailed line-item budget that reflects a realistic estimate of project costs (5 points)
- A budget narrative that clearly describes assumptions and explains how costs were calculated (5 points)

## Section 4: How to Submit a Proposal

### 4.1 Prepare

a. Office Hours

- DHS will hold “RFP open office hours” at 11:30 a.m. Eastern Time on Thursday, April 4, 2024, via Microsoft Teams. Anyone interested in the RFP and in submitting a Proposal may drop in during this time to ask questions.
- Attendance during office hours is not required in order to submit a Proposal. Preliminary answers will be provided orally for questions asked during the office hours. Final, definitive answers will be posted in writing on the RFP Opportunity Page and the DHS Solicitations webpage.
- Prospective Proposers can join the office hours by:
  - Calling (267) 368-7515 and using Conference ID 758 643 319#
  - Or following this link: [Click here to join the meeting](#)
  - Or copying and pasting this link: [https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting\\_YWJjMWJmMjQtOTI3NC00YTM5LWE0MmQtMTM2YmQxOWM3Yzli%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%22e0273d12-e4cb-4eb1-9f70-8bba16fb968d%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%2214304098-3e8b-4bb4-b68e-65e6055b37bf%22%7d](https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_YWJjMWJmMjQtOTI3NC00YTM5LWE0MmQtMTM2YmQxOWM3Yzli%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%22e0273d12-e4cb-4eb1-9f70-8bba16fb968d%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%2214304098-3e8b-4bb4-b68e-65e6055b37bf%22%7d)

## 4.2 Submit a Proposal

- a. Proposers should take time to review and understand the RFP in its entirety including:
- The background (see Section 1: Why DHS Is Issuing This RFP)
  - The narrative (see Section 2: What DHS Is Looking For)
  - The requirements (see Section 3: Proposal Requirements and Evaluation Criteria)
  - The evaluation process (see Section 5: How DHS Will Evaluate Your Proposal)
- b. Proposers must use the Response Form to develop your Proposal. Type your responses to each requested item directly into the Response Form. It is available on the RFP Opportunity Page on our DHS Bonfire Portal and on our Active Solicitations webpage with the RFP announcement at <https://solicitations.alleghenycounty.us/>.
- c. Collaborative Proposals
- Collaborative Proposals, in which two or more entities partner to apply together, are permitted. Collaborative Proposals can include:
    - i. Lead Agency: The County can enter a contract with only one partner of a Collaborative Proposal. Therefore, a Collaborative Proposal must identify one entity as the Lead Agency that will be the contracting party with the County. The Lead Agency should be the Proposer.
    - ii. Partners: Partners must be committed to a role in carrying out the Contract Services and will be compensated for that role. Collaborative Proposals must attach a signed letter of commitment from each Partner that details and agrees to their role in the Contract Services.
  - Entities may participate in more than one Collaborative Proposal.
- d. Proposers must submit a complete Proposal that includes the following attachments that are available on our Active Solicitations website:
- Response Form
  - Partner commitment letters, if applicable

- Resumes for all key personnel
  - W-9
  - Minority, Women or Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (MWDBE) and Veteran Owned Small Business (VOSB) documents (see sections 6.1 and 6.2)
- e. Proposers should not send any attachments other than those listed either above or in the Response Form.
  - f. Proposers must make sure to complete each section of the Response Form and to stay within any word counts or page limits specified in the Response Form.
  - g. **Proposals must be submitted electronically by logging into or creating an account on Bonfire at <https://alleghenycountydhs.bonfirehub.com> and uploading the required submission documents to the appropriate [RFP Opportunity Page](#) no later than 3:00 p.m. Eastern Time on Thursday, May 2, 2024, to be considered for review. If you are having trouble making an account or uploading your documents, please contact Bonfire Support. You can also reach out to the DHS Procurement Team at [DHSProposals@alleghenycounty.us](mailto:DHSProposals@alleghenycounty.us) or (412) 350-6352.**
  - h. All Proposals must be submitted before the deadline! Once the deadline has passed, the RFP Opportunity Page will no longer accept Proposals. If a Proposal is late, it will be rejected and will not be presented to the Evaluation Committee (as described in Section 5 below) for review and scoring.
  - i. Proposers will receive an email acknowledging receipt of their Proposal. If a Proposer does not receive this notification within 48 hours of submitting their Proposal, please contact: [DHSProposals@alleghenycounty.us](mailto:DHSProposals@alleghenycounty.us).

#### 4.3 How to Contact DHS about this RFP and RFP Communications

- a. If you have any questions about this RFP, please use the Vendor Discussion feature through the DHS Bonfire Portal at <https://alleghenycountydhs.bonfirehub.com> on the [RFP Opportunity Page](#), or email us at [DHSProposals@alleghenycounty.us](mailto:DHSProposals@alleghenycounty.us).
  - a. All content-related questions must be submitted by the Questions Deadline at 3 p.m. Eastern Time on Friday, April 19, 2024.
  - b. You may submit technical or logistical questions at any time, even after the Questions Deadline.
- b. All information about the RFP, including answers to all content-related questions and any changes or amendments, will be posted on the Bonfire [RFP Opportunity Page](#) and on our Active Solicitations website at <https://solicitations.alleghenycounty.us/>. Once you have created an account and indicated you are interested in this RFP, you will receive automatic email updates through Bonfire when any questions, changes or amendments are available.
  - a. Please check our DHS Bonfire Portal and the website regularly for answers to questions, additional information and changes to the RFP or the RFP process.
  - b. The webpage will be updated only on Thursdays, with any new information visible after 6 p.m.
  - c. The last Q&A and website update for this RFP will be on Thursday, April 25, 2024, at 6 p.m. We will make every effort not to post any new information after this time; however, we reserve the right to post new information in emergency circumstances.

#### 4.4 New Provider Requirements

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

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

#### 4.5 Other Information

- a. **The issuance of this RFP does not obligate the County to accept any Proposal or enter into an Agreement with any Proposers. The County reserves the right to reject any and all Proposals and to not enter into an Agreement for the Contracted Services.**
- b. Any Agreement originating from this RFP is subject to all the Terms and Conditions specified in Section 6: Contract Requirements for Successful Proposers.
- c. Proposers are responsible for all costs related to the preparation and submission of a Proposal.
- d. Proposals become the property of the County and may become part of any subsequent Agreement between the Proposer and the County.
- e. Successful Proposal(s) will be posted online in the DHS Solicitations Archive after an Agreement has been fully executed by the County and the Successful Proposer(s).

#### 4.6 Pennsylvania’s Right-to-Know Law

Proposers should be aware that all documents and materials submitted in response to this RFP may be subject to requests for access to public records made pursuant to Pennsylvania’s Right-To-Know Law (RTKL). Under the RTKL, records in the possession of a public agency like the County are presumed to be public records and the County may have to make documents and materials submitted by the Proposer available to a requestor after an award of an Agreement is made.

If the Proposer includes any information within its Proposal that the Proposer asserts is either a “trade secret” or “confidential proprietary information,” as those terms are defined under the RTKL, the Proposer must include with its Proposal a written statement signed by an authorized representative of the Proposer identifying those portions or parts of its Proposal that the Proposer believes constitute a “trade secret” or “confidential proprietary information” and provide contact information to enable DHS to contact the Proposer in the event that the County

receives a Right-To-Know request for the Proposal. The Proposer shall have five (5) business days from date of receipt of any notification from the County to provide a written statement signed by an authorized representative of the Proposer explaining why the Proposal or any portion thereof is exempt from disclosure as a trade secret, confidential proprietary information or other legal reason. The County shall consider this statement in either granting or denying a request for public access to the Proposal or any portion thereof. The County will notify the Proposer of its decision whether to grant or deny the request either in whole or in part.

## **Section 5: How We Will Evaluate Your Proposal**

DHS will convene an Evaluation Committee to evaluate Proposals. The Evaluation Committee will assign scores to each Proposal by awarding points based on the evaluation criteria in Section 3: Proposal Requirements and Evaluation Criteria, by using the point scale listed in Section 5.1 b.

### **5.1 Evaluation of Proposals**

The evaluation process will consist of the following steps:

- a. DHS will form an Evaluation Committee. The Evaluation Committee, which will be comprised of evaluators with expertise in the subject matter of this RFP, may include community members with lived experience, external subject matter experts, provider representative(s), representative(s) from key partners or funders, and DHS staff.
- b. All Evaluation Committee members will individually review and score each Proposal. Each Evaluation Committee member will award points for each response on a Proposer's Response Form, utilizing their personal expertise and best judgment of how the Proposal submitted by that Proposer meets the evaluation criteria in Section 3 using the following scale:
  - 0 – Not addressed in Proposal
  - 1 – Poor
  - 2 – Below expectations
  - 3 – Meets expectations
  - 4 – Exceeds expectations
  - 5 – Outstanding
- c. Each 0-5 score will be multiplied by the appropriate weight for the number of possible points noted after each evaluation criterion in Section 3. For example, for a criterion worth 15 points, the 0-5 score would be multiplied by three. An "Outstanding" response would receive 15 points, while one that "Meets Expectations" would receive nine points.
- d. DHS will tally the average scores of the members of the Evaluation Committee and report a list of average scores to the entire Committee. The Committee will meet, consider the average scores, and arrive at a consensus on which Proposer(s) can best provide the Contract Services in response to the RFP. The Committee will have discretion to either: (1) recommend to the DHS Director that a reduced number of Proposals be shortlisted for more extensive review through a formal oral presentation to the Committee, interview or a site visit or (2) recommend to the DHS Director that DHS

request authorization for the County to enter into an Agreement(s) with the Successful Proposer(s).

- e. As described in d above, DHS, on behalf of the County, shall have the exclusive discretion to shortlist a reduced number of Proposals for more extensive review. In this case, DHS may request that shortlisted Proposers make a formal oral presentation to the Evaluation Committee. Each Committee member will individually score the oral presentation of the shortlisted Proposers using the following criteria and the scale outlined in 5.1b. The maximum score that a shortlisted Proposer's oral presentation can receive is 15 points:
  - Presentation demonstrates Proposer's ability to implement the Contract Services effectively (5 points)
  - Proposer's answers to Evaluation Committee's questions demonstrate Proposer's ability to implement the Contract Services (5 points)
  - Proposer's presentation is thoughtful and well prepared (5 points)
- f. DHS will tally the scores of the members of the Evaluation Committee and report a list of average scores to the entire Committee. The Committee will meet, consider the scores and arrive at a consensus as to which Proposer(s) can best provide the Contract Services in response to the RFP.
- g. The Committee will submit its recommendation for award of an Agreement or Agreements to the DHS Director for approval. The Director will, in turn, submit a request to the County Manager for approval for the County to enter into an Agreement with the Successful Proposer(s).
- h. At any time during the evaluation process, DHS may contact a Proposer to discuss any areas of the Proposal needing clarification or further explanation.
- i. At any time during the evaluation process, DHS may contact a Proposer's references.
- j. As part of determining a Proposer's eligibility to enter a contract with Allegheny County, all Proposers' financial audits or other documentation will be reviewed by DHS fiscal analysts to ensure a Proposer's financial stability.
- k. The County is under no obligation to award or enter into an Agreement with a Proposer as a result of this RFP. The County reserves the right to reject any and all Proposals.**
- l. All Proposers will be notified of the County's final decision of which Proposer(s) will be awarded an Agreement.
- m. Proposers that are not awarded an Agreement but who are interested in receiving feedback regarding their submission may request a phone call at [DHSProposals@alleghenycounty.us](mailto:DHSProposals@alleghenycounty.us).

## 5.2 Other Requirements

For a Proposal to be eligible for evaluation, it must be:

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



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

## Section 6: Contract Requirements for Successful Proposers

In order to enter into an Agreement with the County, Successful Proposers must comply with all contract requirements listed below and all standard terms and conditions contained in a County contract for provision of services to DHS and its offices. In addition, Successful Proposers must be able to meet the insurance requirements necessary to provide the Contract Services. Additional details about contracting with Allegheny County and the insurance requirements are available in the [DHS Contract Specifications Manual](#) and the [Insurance Requirements Overview](#) at [www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations](http://www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations) under the “Required documents.”

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

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

- a. All Proposals must include a completed Allegheny County DHS Combined MWDBE Form and supporting documents. The Allegheny County DHS Combined MWDBE Form should be completed as follows:
  - All Proposers must complete Section 1 – Contact Information and attach their MWDBE Diversity Plan (see Section 4 – Sample Diversity Policy).
  - If the Proposer can meet the MWDBE contract goals, the Proposer should complete Section 2 – MWDBE Participation Statement. Proposers also must attach the MWDBE certifications of the firms cited in the Participation Statement.
  - If the Proposer would like to request a waiver from participating in the MWDBE contract goals, the Proposer should complete Section 2 – MWDBE Participation Statement and Section 3 – MWDBE Participation Waiver Request Form.
- b. MWDBE forms and resources can be found at [www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations](http://www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations):
  - [Allegheny County DHS Combined MWDBE Form](#)
  - MWDBE Resources
    - [MWDBE Contract Specifications Manual](#)
    - [MWDBE Guide for DHS Proposers](#)
- c. For more information about MWDBEs, visit the [Allegheny County Department of Equity and Inclusion website](#).
- d. A listing of certified DBE vendors can be found at <https://paucp.dbesystem.com/>.

### 6.2 Veteran-Owned Small Business (VOSB) Requirement



Allegheny County also has a goal of 5% participation for veteran-owned small businesses (VOSB) in all contracts. The County, therefore, expects that Successful Proposers will make a “good faith effort” to help the County meet this goal.

- a. A veteran-owned small business is defined by the County as a business having 100 or fewer full-time employees and not less than 51% of which is owned by one or more veterans, or in the case of any publicly owned business, not less than 51% of the stock of which is owned by one or more veterans, and the management and daily business operations of which are controlled by one or more veterans. The VOSB vendor **MUST** provide proof of veteran ownership including percentage and name and address of business.
  - For contracts under \$100,000, VOSB vendors are from all bonding requirements.
- b. All Proposals must include either of the following:
  - If the Proposer can meet the VOSB contract goal, a completed VOSB Participation Statement is required. You must also attach a copy of the VOSB vendor(s) DD 214 discharge form(s) cited in the Participation Statement.
  - If the Proposer requests a waiver from participating in the VOSB contract goal, a completed VOSB Participation Statement and VOSB Waiver Request are required.
- c. VOSB forms can be found at [www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations](http://www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations):
  - [VOSB Participation Statement](#)
  - [VOSB Waiver Request](#)
- d. A listing of Small Businesses, Small Diverse Businesses, and Veteran Business Enterprises (SB, SDB, and VBE) can be found at [www.dgs.internet.state.pa.us/suppliersearch](http://www.dgs.internet.state.pa.us/suppliersearch).

### **6.3 HIPAA Compliance**

DHS is a covered entity under the Health Information Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Therefore, a Successful Proposer must comply with all HIPAA requirements.

### **6.4 Cyber Security**

- a. Successful Proposers must meet the minimum computer specifications that begin on page 14 of the [DHS Contract Specifications Manual](#), available at [www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations](http://www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations).
- b. All electronic devices must have sufficient security software and settings to minimize the risk of an information breach.
- c. Successful Proposers must also have policies in place to ensure that electronic devices are physically secure when not in use (e.g., locked in a vehicle trunk, password protected).

### **6.5 Equal Employment Opportunity and Non-Discrimination Requirements**

By submitting a Proposal, a Proposer agrees to not discriminate against any employee, applicant for employment, independent contractor, client or any other person on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin or ancestry, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual

orientation, disability, marital status, familial status, age (40 or over), or use of a guide or support animal because of blindness, deafness or physical disability.

## **6.6 Language Diversity Requirements**

Successful Proposer(s) must assure resources are secured and/or made available for participants/consumers/clients with limited English proficiency or other communication barriers. Such actions shall include but not be limited to assessing the need for interpreters, evaluating the need for alternate language materials, identifying internal and external resources to meet identified needs, and accessing services contracted by DHS through their assigned contract monitor(s).