



Allegheny County Department of Human Services

Request for Proposals

RFP for a Temporary Housing Program for People with Acute Mental Health Needs

RFP Posting:

Thursday, September 12, 2024

Information Session:

10 a.m. Eastern Time on Tuesday, October 1, 2024

Questions Deadline:

3 p.m. Eastern Time on Friday, October 18, 2024

Submission Deadline:

3 p.m. Eastern Time on Thursday, October 31, 2024

Estimated Award Decision/Notification:

January 2025

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. 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 RFP and Agreement
5. Community Residential Rehabilitation Services (CRR): Services specifically designed and operated to assist people with chronic psychiatric disabilities to live as independently as possible through the provision of training and assistance in the skills of community living and by serving as an integrating focus for the person's rehabilitation. CRRS are defined, regulated and operated to implement the principle of least restrictive service alternative. An individual may be served by CRRS only for as long as the services are warranted by continued need. These services may be licensed through the PA Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services as Full CRRs or Partial CRRs.
6. Activities of Daily Living (ADLs): Activities of daily living include bathing or showering, dressing, getting in and out of bed or a chair, walking, using the toilet and eating. ADLs are determined to be limited when the individual has difficulty performing the activity independently, without special equipment or at all. The limitation may be temporary or chronic at the time of assessment.
7. Denial Rate: The rate at which people referred to a housing program are not accepted or denied entry; denials may be due to Client preference or housing provider refusal
8. DHS: [Allegheny County] Department of Human Services
9. DHS Bonfire Portal: A Bonfire webpage specific to the Allegheny County Department of Human Services where Proposers can view open, past and awarded solicitations released through Bonfire
10. Harm Reduction: An evidence-based approach to engaging with people who use drugs, equipping them with life-saving tools and information to create positive change in their life and/or preventing overdose and death
11. Low-Barrier Approach: A programming approach that seeks to minimize the demands placed on Clients and makes services readily available and easily accessible
12. Long-Term Structured Residence (LTSR): highly structured therapeutic residential mental health treatment facilities designed to treat individuals 18 and older who are eligible for hospitalization but can receive adequate care in this setting
13. Master Leasing: An arrangement in which a provider, rather than a Client, leases housing from a property owner
14. Motivational Interviewing: An evidence-based intervention that uses a conversational approach designed to help people address their ambivalence to change.

15. Mental Health First Aid: An evidence-based early intervention course, designed to teach skills needed to recognize and respond to signs and symptoms of mental health and substance use challenges and to provide initial support until connected with appropriate professional help
16. OBH: [Allegheny County DHS] Office of Behavioral Health
17. Proposal: A completed Response Form, with specified attachments, submitted in response to this RFP
18. Program Agreement: An agreement, signed by the Client, that outlines the rules for participating in the program
19. Proposer: The individual, non-profit organization, or for-profit organization or business submitting a Proposal in response to this RFP
20. Response Form: The Word document in which Proposers respond to information requested for this RFP
21. RFP: Request for Proposals
22. RFP Opportunity Page: The Bonfire webpage where the RFP and all required supporting documents are listed and where the RFP submission documents must be uploaded for a Proposal to be considered for review
23. Serious Mental Illness: A mental illness that interferes with a person's life and ability to function
24. Termination Rate: The rate at which people leave the program without achieving a successful outcome
25. Trauma-Informed: An organizational structure and treatment framework that involves understanding, recognizing and responding to the effects of all types of traumata and its impact on human behavior
26. 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), is seeking Proposals from multiple qualified Proposers to provide temporary (6-12 months) supported housing to adults with mental health (MH) conditions; these individuals often have an extensive history with behavioral and physical health services, including significant emergency and crisis care. Clients may also have recently experienced a hospitalization or a significant crisis or be stepping down from a longer-term treatment facility. The Successful Proposer(s) will offer housing that is safe, clean and supportive, and that enables Clients to work with a community-based MH service team on recovery goals and psychiatric stabilization to rebuild independent living skills. Clients must successfully transition into housing without on-site staff within 6-12 months.

In issuing this RFP, DHS seeks to expand its current capacity to provide effective short-term supported housing for people with a primary mental health diagnosis who may have co-occurring substance use disorders. This housing model will henceforth be referred to as the “Temporary Housing Program” or the “Program.”

In this RFP, the individuals served at the Temporary Housing Program will be referred to as “Clients.”

The Successful Proposers will have staff who work closely with the Client’s treatment team, monitoring and documenting Client progress and reporting to the treatment team if there are areas of concern. Staff are not required to be onsite 24/7; however, 40-50 hours per week on-site, with 2-3 hours per week of direct time with each Client is expected.

Proposed housing may consist of apartments, single room occupancy units or other multi-resident configurations. Depending on the scope and the level of care proposed, Successful Proposers may need to obtain a partial [Community Residential Rehabilitation](#) (CRR) license to provide this service. DHS and the State will work with Successful Proposers to determine if a partial Community Residential Rehabilitation (CRR) license is required. If applicable, a CRR license is not required to submit a response to this RFP but must be obtained prior to implementation of service. See Section 2.B, Housing Location and Design, for information that may help to determine if partial CRR license is required.

Please join us for a [virtual information session](#) on Tuesday, October 1 at 10:00 a.m. Eastern Time.

Award Details

DHS intends to enter into an agreement with one or more Successful Proposers for an initial term of two years with a County option to renew. DHS expects to support Successful Proposers whose total Program budget results in an annual per bed cost ranging from \$21,000 to \$31,000. We will review each proposed budget and budget narrative for all income and costs, including rental payments and/or Client contributions. Proposed budgets should clearly indicate the proposed cost

per bed per year in reference to the total amount proposed. All proposed costs will be considered for reasonableness, and the final budget and contract terms will be negotiated with the Successful Proposer(s).

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

Current MH Residential Housing providers are eligible to apply for this RFP but do not have to unless they are seeking to expand their current capacity to offer this programming.

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

What’s important to us

We are looking for Proposers with the capacity to:

- Provide safe, secure and non-judgmental housing and work with Clients and their MH service providers to rapidly address barriers to housing independence.
- Provide culturally responsive services to meet the needs of diverse communities, with access to networks, resources and services that will allow all Clients fair and equitable access. Proposers must understand how the intersections of race, gender, sexual orientation, age, immigration status and language can compound to act as a barrier to housing and mental health services.
- Embrace low-barrier approaches to service delivery and strive to provide a welcoming space.
- Collaborate effectively with treatment teams and other external partners to help Clients connect with vital resources that promote independence, stability and well-being.
- Ensure the safety and security of the Clients residing at the Temporary Housing Program while promoting a sense of community with the surrounding neighborhood.
- Have an existing housing site or a plan in place to secure appropriate housing that is large enough to offer a strong staffing model at a reasonable price. We are prioritizing housing that is accessible to people of different abilities.

Timeline

RFP Posting	Thursday, September 12, 2024
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Information Session (see section 4.1 for details)	Tuesday, October 1 from 10 to 11 a.m. Eastern
Questions Deadline	Friday, October 18 at 3 p.m. Eastern
Last Website and Q&A Update	Thursday, October 24 at 6 p.m. Eastern
Submission Deadline	Thursday, October 31 at 3 p.m. Eastern
Estimated Award Decision/Notification	January 2025

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

DHS is responsible for ensuring that appropriate services are in place for County residents with behavioral health service needs. Through its Office of Behavioral Health (OBH), DHS contracts for and monitors housing services for Clients with serious mental illness and/or a recent mental health crisis/acute illness. The continuum of programs provides these individuals with supervised housing and additional support to prepare them to live safely and stably in an independent community setting.

We recently conducted a review of our MH housing system to ensure that it meets the needs of the current County population, and found significant areas in need of improvement. We found that the most vulnerable Clients were not being prioritized for services and that Clients were not being served in a timely manner. In response, we implemented a data-driven model of prioritization and are now serving people faster with fewer people on long waitlists.

The MH housing system is a complicated system with nine levels of care. Regulations and guidance lack specificity about how the level of care corresponds to diagnoses or other Client needs, clinical qualifications of staff, or Client-to-staff ratios. In addition, within levels of housing care there is inconsistency in the support Clients receive. Our analysis revealed that more than 90% of Clients in MH housing were also receiving considerable Medicaid-funded MH services (e.g., community treatment teams, medication checks, mobile mental health, integrated community wellness center services, blended service coordination). Moreover, most onsite staff have had minimal clinical training.

Our findings confirm that MH housing compares programmatically with other DHS-funded programs that support people exiting homelessness or recovering from substance use disorder. These other systems are also housing high vulnerability Clients and providing similar levels of service, including 24/7 care in some settings. But the MH housing has a much higher and more variable cost structure, with prices per bed per year ranging from double to more than five times greater than those other systems.

As a result of the findings, DHS is transforming its MH housing system to:

- Simplify the levels of care.
- Implement a program model with specific minimum requirements on staffing, services, low denials, and high quality and satisfaction that can be measured.
- Ensure that Medicaid-compensable services are being paid for with Medicaid funds.
- Create a model more in-line with Client choice and better outcomes (i.e., reduction in the number of group homes and increased independence).
- Demonstrate equity in the costs paid to providers for programs funded by DHS.
- Introduce a more proactive monitoring regime using regular Client surveys, administrative data and welfare-check data to monitor provider quality and safety.

We are issuing this RFP to transform and expand MH residential services.

Section 2: What We Are Looking For

A. Target Population

Individuals served in the Temporary Housing Program are typically people with a serious mental illness who have recently experienced a hospitalization or longer-term care and need support while they stabilize. Eligible participants must have a primary diagnosis of serious mental illness (e.g., bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, major depressive disorder) and may have a co-occurring substance use disorder diagnosis. Participants cannot have a primary diagnosis of Organic Brain Syndrome or Intellectual Disability (ID).

From June 2023 to July 2024, 548 Clients were served in MH housing:

- Gender: 64% (N=348) were male and 38% (N=200) were female
- Race: 47% (N=258) were Black/African American, 34% (N=184) were White and 19% (N=106) were listed as other race
- Age: Clients were distributed across age groups, with about 20% in each of the following age categories: 25-34, 35-44, 45-54 and 55-64. 10% were under the age of 25 and 6% were over the age of 65.
- Diagnoses: The most common diagnosis was schizophrenia (about 65%), followed by intellectual disability, depression, anxiety, psychosis and personality disorder. Less than 15 percent had a diagnosed substance use disorder.
- Income: 91% received public benefits in the last year and 50% were receiving SSI benefits throughout the year. 14% reported income at an average of \$4,000/year (PA Department of Labor and Industry).

Eligible Clients will often have extensive histories with mental and physical health services, including significant emergency and crisis care. More than 90% will also be receiving considerable Medicaid or private insurance-funded MH services (e.g., community treatment

teams, mobile medication, mobile mental health, integrated community wellness center services and blended service coordination). To ensure that Clients will receive the appropriate level of care and intensity to meet current needs, Community Care Behavioral Health will conduct a review of each Client’s treatment plan and adherence prior to placement in the Temporary Housing Program.

Referrals may be made by any of the following:

- Service Coordination or Enhanced Service Coordination
- Justice-Related Services
- Community Treatment Team
- Mobile Transition-Aged Youth team
- Integrated Dual Disorder Treatment
- Psychiatric hospital social worker
- Residential Treatment Facility-Adults
- Extended Acute Care
- Other behavioral health professionals

B. Housing Location and Design

Proposers should identify specific sites for the Program. Locations should be close to public transportation. We are open to sites of various sizes, recognizing that very small sites are less cost effective. We are also seeking units that are accessible for people of different abilities. Clients tend to prefer and do better in apartment style locations and single, rather than shared, rooms, so those should be prioritized.

The type of housing proposed will have implications for whether a partial CRR license is required. Proposers should review the following table for more information and complete the version of this table provided on the Response Form.

Housing Arrangement	Impact on Licensing
Scattered Site	None
Facility Based	None
Lease to Client (can be month-to-month) + Program Agreement	Does not trigger license
Program Agreement only (no lease)	Partial license required
Client Support	
Observation of Client well-being	Does not trigger license
24/7 on-site staff	Does not trigger license
Prompting about daily living activities such as cooking, cleaning, pro-social activities, treatment appointments, employment	Does not trigger license
Observation/reporting to treatment team about how Client is doing with managing symptoms and keeping up with daily living activities	Does not trigger license

Observing, inquiring, prompting Client about medication adherence	Does not trigger license
Managing crises	Does not trigger license
Teaching or hands-on assistance with daily living activities like cooking, grocery shopping and cleaning	Partial license required
Dispensing medications or any hands-on assistance with medication	Partial license required

DHS and the State will work with Successful Proposers to determine if a partial CRR license is required. The CRR license is not required at the time of Proposal submission but must be obtained prior to the implementation of service, if applicable.

Suggested sites should be furnished, including kitchens that are fully equipped. Budgets should include the cost of move-in kits (e.g., sheets, towels, dishes). The proposed sites must comply with code and zoning requirements and be able to pass inspection.

C. Housing Support Services

Housing Operations: Successful Proposer(s) will be responsible for managing the day-to-day operations of the Temporary Housing Program, including Master and/or Sub-Leasing, vacancy management, rent collection, provision of basic amenities like utilities and internet, building maintenance and upkeep, and establishing and maintaining safety protocols that include maintenance of a basic security system. The Successful Proposer(s) will actively work to create a positive and inclusive community among Clients, staff and the local neighborhood by establishing policies that promote harmony and safety (including clear strategies for de-escalation when needed).

Client support: The Successful Proposer, in partnership with treatment teams, will work with Clients to support and empower them, ensuring that their needs are being met and that they are moving towards independence (i.e., living in housing with no onsite staff). The Successful Proposer(s) will:

- Interview potential Clients and provide tours of the facility, establishing and maintaining a low denial and termination rate.
- Assist residents with entry/orientation and with vacating the premises when they are ready to leave.
- Provide regular Client welfare checks and communicate when needed with the Client treatment teams
- Provide basic de-escalation and crisis management support, engaging treatment teams or reSolve when appropriate.
- For Programs that do NOT require a partial CRR license, staff will communicate with the Client treatment teams as needed and monitor or observe Clients' ability to conduct daily activities such as cooking, cleaning, medication reminders and paying bills.

- For Programs that DO require a partial CRR license, staff may perform daily living activities for Clients such as dispensing medication, providing meals regularly, cooking, paying bills and transporting Clients to appointments.

Client self-pay: Our expectation is that Clients will contribute 30% of their income to the Program, which is similar to the cost of other housing options such as Permanent Supported Housing (PSH). Since most Clients will be eligible for SSI or SSDI, this will be around \$3,000 per annum (30% of \$841 per month). The Successful Proposer(s) will be responsible for collecting Client self-pay.

Coordination with treatment teams: The Successful Proposer(s) will work closely with existing treatment teams to ensure that the Client's treatment needs are being met. Changes in behavior should be reported to the treatment teams.

Documentation: The Successful Proposer will participate in meetings with the Client's treatment team (as requested) and will be familiar with the treatment goals for each Client. The Successful Proposer(s) will support those goals and encourage goal completion. Weekly notes on each Client will be recorded and should be related to observations of Client well-being. The Successful Proposer(s) must input data in an accurate and timely manner. Critical incidents must be reported to DHS in the Behavioral Health Critical Incidents system. The Successful Proposer(s) must work closely with DHS staff to continuously monitor and improve services and operations.

Service Partnerships and Collaboration: While the primary partner for Successful Proposers will be the Client treatment teams, we encourage partnerships and relationships with (and referrals to) other supports (e.g., employment programs, additional housing navigation support, and other community entities like farmer's markets, and pro-social supports like recreation and senior centers).

Referrals and Intake: Behavioral health professionals will refer Clients into DHS's synergy application; Program referrals will be made by DHS. Referrals include information about the level of care needed, history with residential care and treatment history. Eligibility for programs is based on a data-driven model or priority tiers, which include people transitioning to the community from inpatient settings. Eligible referrals are matched to program vacancies as those become available and individuals who have been waiting the longest for placements are prioritized wherever possible. When a Successful Proposer receives a referral from DHS, they are expected to conduct an interview and tour (in-person or virtually) and admit the Client when there is alignment on the part of the site and the Client. DHS monitors declines (both by the person and the provider) in placements and seeks a successful placement in the shortest amount of time possible.

We anticipate that Clients will stay in these programs an average of 6-12 months. Once a person is discharged, that bed becomes available for another Client.

Staffing & Staff Qualifications: The Successful Proposer(s) will establish a staffing complement with sufficient staff qualified to address the target population's needs. While 24/7

staffing models are not required, DHS expects to fund a range of programs, including additional 24/7 staffing approaches. If 24/7 staffing is not being proposed, Successful Proposers will offer a staffing plan with on-call staff or other management plans to ensure that reasonable Client needs are met when staff are not physically present. Staffing models can also include House Managers, where staff are provided room and board and a stipend (or similar) to stay at the facility 24/7. 40-50 hours per week on-site with 2-3 hours per week of direct time with each Client is expected.

At a minimum, Program staff will have:

- Passion for helping people with mental health disorders and other co-occurring conditions.
- Understanding of how trauma impacts behavior.
- Training and/or work experience using crisis intervention and de-escalation techniques.
- Training and/or work experience in Motivational Interviewing, Harm Reduction, Trauma-Informed Care and Mental Health First Aid.
- Strong and up-to-date knowledge of local social services, including those that offer support for individuals seeking affordable housing, employment, and assistance accessing public benefits as well as knowledge and experience with issues such as substance use disorder, intellectual disabilities and physical health concerns.

Additionally, the Successful Proposers will ensure that all staff receive ongoing professional development and training in best practices for supporting the population.

If the proposed Program requires a partial CRR license, staff qualifications must comply with the CRR regulations.

Successful Proposers must be committed to providing high-quality, inclusive and culturally responsive services to all Clients regardless of their race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (SOGIE), intellectual or physical ability, English language proficiency or life experiences.

D. Budget

Proposers must submit a budget and budget narrative for Temporary Housing services, including start-up expenses. The budget may include, but is not limited to, the following categories:

- Program income, including expected funding from DHS, Medicaid billing for compensable services (if provided), Client self-pay/rent and any other program income
- Start-up costs (e.g., furnishings, supplies)
- Staffing expenses, including salary, benefits, training, travel and communications
- Food or meal services (if proposing to provide)
- Cleaning and maintenance
- Security services
- Rent (or rent equivalent in the event the Proposer owns the building), utilities including internet
- Property-related insurances, as applicable
- Administrative expenses (not to exceed 10% of total budget)

Section 3: Proposal Requirements and Evaluation Criteria

DHS will evaluate Proposals based upon the evaluation criteria listed below. Evaluators may also consider any relevant experience DHS may have with a Proposer. Proposers must address their experience and 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 115 points, as outlined in the following sections.

Organizational Experience (35 points total)

- Experience delivering any/all of the following: behavioral health services, supported housing, housing navigation and other supportive services to a population with acute behavioral health issues. (10 points)
- Experience delivering high quality, culturally compassionate, low-barrier services to vulnerable populations (10 points)
- Strong organizational and management structure, including evidence of internal communication, external coordination, a strong financial accounting system, quality assurance and documentation practices, and absence of unresolved monitoring or audit findings (10 points)
- Experience leasing/owning and operating buildings for the purposes of providing supported housing (5 points)

Program Strategy (45 points total)

- Description of the proposed size of the Program and the proposed facility(ies) (owned, leased or rented) in which the Program will be offered. Include the type/style of units and a timeline to prepare them for occupancy, including any necessary renovations. Complete the table provided in the response form. (10 points)
- Well-conceived plan for delivering each of the components outlined in the Service Description (15 points)
 - Housing Operation
 - Client Support/Intake
 - Client Self Pay
 - Documentation
 - Service Partnerships and Collaboration
- Approach to creating a safe and inclusive community and fostering positive relationships among Clients, staff and the local neighborhood (10 points)
- Experience with and approach to successfully coordinating with key partners, including DHS, Community Care Behavioral Health, Client treatment teams and external partners who can help improve independence and well-being of Clients (10 points)

Program Staffing and Administration (20 points total)

- Justified staffing plan including a list of all staff positions, number of staff, and the hours and qualifications for each position (10 points)
- Plan to recruit and retain high-quality, diverse staff (5 points)
- Plan for staff onboarding, training and performance management (5 points)

Budget and Budget Narrative (15 points total)

- Detailed line-item budget that reflects a realistic and cost-effective estimate of the start-up and operational costs associated with the first two years of the Program (10 points)
- Budget narrative that clearly explains and justifies all line items in the proposed budget (5 points)

Section 4: How to Submit a Proposal

4.1 Prepare

a. Information Session

- DHS will conduct an information session about this RFP from 10 to 11 a.m. Eastern Time on Tuesday, October 1, 2024, via Microsoft Teams. It will include a presentation about the RFP and DHS staff will answer questions from attendees.
- Attendance at the information session is not required in order to submit a Proposal. Everything (video recording, slide deck, transcribed Q&A) shared during the information session will be posted afterward on the [RFP Opportunity Page](#) and the DHS Solicitations webpage.
- Preliminary answers will be provided orally for questions asked during the conference. Final definitive answers will be posted in writing on Bonfire on the [RFP Opportunity Page](#) and on the DHS Solicitations webpage.
- Prospective Proposers can join the information session by:
 - Calling (267) 368-7515 and using Conference ID: 909 207 861#
 - 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_ZmY3Njc0YjgtMjRhYS00NDZkLWE2M2ItNjdIOWE5MzQ3Yzlh%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%22e0273d12-e4cb-4eb1-9f70-8bba16fb968d%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%22d14c6dca-47dd-45a0-a62e-11bf0cce95e0%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 include 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:
 - Response Form (available on the RFP Opportunity Page and the Active Solicitation Webpage)
 - Partner commitment letters, if applicable
 - W-9
 - Minority, Women or Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (MWDDBE) and Veteran Owned Small Business (VOSB) documents (see sections 7.1 and 7.2)
- 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, October 31, 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 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.

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.

- a. All content-related questions must be submitted by the Questions Deadline at 3 p.m. Eastern Time on Friday, October 18, 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, October 24, 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.
- 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.

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 General Requirements/Contract Specifications Manual](#) and the [Insurance Requirements Overview](#).

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 on the [RFP Opportunity Page](#) and through the links provided below:
- [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 exempt 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.
- e. VOSB forms and resources can be found on the [RFP Opportunity Page](#) and through the links provided below:
- [VOSB Participation Statement](#)
 - [VOSB Waiver Request](#)

- c. 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.

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

6.5 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 secure appropriate resources and make them 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).