



Allegheny County Department of Human Services

# Request for Proposals

## Conflict Counsel for Parents Involved in Child Dependency Cases

**RFP Posting:**

Thursday, June 27, 2024

**Questions Deadline:**

3 p.m. Eastern Time on Friday, August 9, 2024

**Submission Deadline:**

3 p.m. Eastern Time on Thursday, August 22, 2024

**Estimated Award Decision/Notification:**

October 2024

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

# Contents

Acronyms and Definitions

The RFP at a Glance

Section 1: Why We Are Issuing This RFP

Section 2: What We Are Looking For

Section 3: Proposal Requirements and Evaluation Criteria

Section 4: How to Submit a Proposal

Section 5: How We Will Evaluate Your Proposal

Section 6: Contract Requirements for Successful Proposers

Appendices are available through the provided links and can be found on the [RFP Opportunity Page](#) and on the [Active Solicitations Webpage](#).

[Appendix A: Child Welfare/Dependency Regions and Courtrooms](#)

# 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. Conflict Counsel for Parents (CCP): the service to be established through this RFP which will provide high-quality legal representation and interdisciplinary supports to parents and legal custodians navigating the Allegheny County child dependency system with the goal of timely family reunification and preservation
5. 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
6. DHS: [Allegheny County] Department of Human Services
7. 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
8. Juvenile Court Project (JCP): A non-profit legal assistance program, funded by DHS, of the Allegheny County Bar Foundation
9. Key Information Demographic System (KIDS): The information system of record for children and families served by DHS
10. Proposal: A completed Response Form, with specified attachments, submitted in response to this RFP
11. Proposer: The individual, non-profit organization, or for-profit organization or business submitting a Proposal in response to this RFP
12. Response Form: The Word document in which Proposers respond to requested information about this RFP
13. RFP: Request for Proposals
14. 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
15. SOGIE: Sexual orientation, gender identity and expression
16. Successful Proposer: The Proposer(s) selected by the County to provide the Contract Services
17. TPR: Termination of Parental Rights

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

# The RFP at a Glance

## *Purpose*

Allegheny County, on behalf of its Department of Human Services (DHS), and the Fifth Judicial District of Allegheny County, Family Division, is seeking Proposals from qualified Proposers to provide Conflict Counsel for Parents (CCP) involved in child dependency cases. CCP will provide high-quality legal representation and interdisciplinary supports to parents and legal custodians navigating the Allegheny County child dependency system with the goal of timely family reunification and preservation. The Successful Proposer must have a centralized office location in Allegheny County accessible by public transit and with private space to meet with clients. However, services may also be provided virtually, by phone, or in a client's home or workplace, upon client request.

## *Award Details*

DHS seeks to enter into an Agreement with one Successful Proposer to provide CCP. Attorneys employed or contracted by the County for similar work currently have a starting salary of \$65,000, with managing attorneys starting at \$85,000 (*please refer to **Table 1. Core Services and Suggested Positions***). We expect the Successful Proposer will have a comparable compensation structure. For all other staffing and costs, DHS will consider the proposed costs for reasonableness and negotiate the final budget with the Successful Proposer(s) through Allegheny County's contracting process.

## *Who can submit a Proposal*

Anyone, including but not limited to law firms, non-profit organizations, for-profit organizations, small businesses and individuals, is eligible to submit a Proposal in response to this RFP. **While anyone can apply, DHS is especially interested in organizations with the administrative infrastructure to operate and implement the program. Individuals are welcome to apply but should consider a partnership with a fiscal sponsor<sup>1</sup> that can hold the contract and provide fiduciary oversight, financial management and other administrative services.** 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.

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

---

<sup>1</sup> For more information on fiscal sponsorship, see <https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/running-nonprofit/administration-and-financial-management/fiscal-sponsorship-nonprofits>

## ***Timeline***

|                                       |                                       |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| RFP Posting                           | Thursday, June 27, 2024               |
| Questions Deadline                    | Friday, August 9 at 3 p.m. Eastern    |
| Last Website and Q&A Update           | Thursday, August 15 at 6 p.m. Eastern |
| Submission Deadline                   | Thursday, August 22 at 3 p.m. Eastern |
| Estimated Award Decision/Notification | October 2024                          |

## ***Who we are***

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

DHS is the largest department of Allegheny County government and provides publicly funded services to more than 200,000 people annually, in areas including child welfare, behavioral health, aging, 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**

Allegheny County is the second largest judicial district in Pennsylvania, with nine dedicated juvenile dependency judges and three full-time juvenile dependency hearing officers. At any given time, approximately 1,600 children are involved in the dependency system (adjudicated or pending adjudication). Judicial assignments are made to align with Allegheny County’s five child welfare offices located across the County. (see [Appendix A](#) for more information).

In Allegheny County, free legal representation is available for parents or legal custodians who are involved in a dependency or Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) proceeding and who fall within income guidelines. The Juvenile Court Project (JCP), a non-profit legal assistance program funded by DHS and associated with the Allegheny County Bar Foundation, is able to provide this representation for many cases. However, when there is a conflict of interest ( i.e., the representation of a client may be materially limited by the lawyer's duties to either another client (e.g. a parent or guardian), a third person, or by the interests of the lawyer themselves.<sup>2</sup>), the Court's Conflict Panel, comprised of part-time contracted and appointed attorneys, represents the parent. From April 2021 through August 2022, JCP averaged 41 new clients per month; the conflict panel averaged 36 referrals per month.

Families involved in dependency or TPR proceedings are often challenged by life stressors, and DHS and the Court are diligent about identifying ways to reduce these stressors and help families

---

<sup>2</sup> For more information on conflicts of interests when representing parents in dependency proceedings, see Chapter 4 “Handling Conflicts of Interest” in Renne, J. L., Peters, J. K., Sandt, C., & American Bar Association. (2004). Legal ethics in child welfare cases. (*No Title*). Accessed at <https://ocla.wa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/LegalEthics.pdf>

move beyond the current situation. The RFP seeks Proposers who can provide high-quality legal representation and, in addition, offer interdisciplinary support to parents and legal custodians navigating the Allegheny County child dependency system. The proposed Service will replace the Conflict Panel and expand the scope of available services, all with the goal of timely family reunification and preservation.

## **Section 2: What We Are Looking For**

DHS and the Courts seek a Successful Proposer to provide high-quality legal representation and interdisciplinary supports to parents and legal custodians navigating the Allegheny County child dependency system with the goal of timely family reunification and preservation, henceforth referred to as Conflict Counsel for Parents (CCP).

### **Client Population**

DHS analyzed a 2023 cohort of 217 individuals who would meet the eligibility criteria for CCP representation. Based on the 189 clients in this cohort with known demographics, clients were primarily male (70% of the known population); equally Black (50%) and White (48%); and most commonly between the ages of 31 through 40 (48%). Additionally, some clients had cross-involvement with adult criminal justice (33%), mental health services (32%), and/or drug and alcohol services (29%).

### **Organizational Capacity**

DHS and the Court seek a Successful Proposer with experience serving the client population, a strong history of collaboration, a centralized office location(s) accessible by public transit and a willingness to meet parents where they live or work.

The Successful Proposer should have experience serving the client population, either in a social service capacity, a legal capacity, or both. JCP conducts intakes for all parents requesting legal representation in dependency proceedings, and if a conflict of interest is identified, JCP will send a client referral to the Successful Proposer for conflict counsel services. With the exception of cases with which they themselves have a conflict, the Successful Proposer will be required to accept all referrals.

DHS and the Courts seek a Successful Proposer with a strong history of collaboration with related organizations such as the Allegheny County Courts, child welfare/dependency staff (e.g., caseworkers), and other parent and child legal representation agencies within the dependency realm (e.g., Juvenile Court Project and KidsVoice, schools, juvenile probation, police departments, Justice-Related Services, adult probation, intimate partner violence agencies, and mental health/behavioral health providers).

Because this population is often dependent on public transit, DHS and the Courts seek a Successful Proposer with a centralized office location accessible by public transit. At a

minimum, this office location must have a private space to meet with clients. Services may also be provided virtually, by phone, or in the client's home or workplace, upon client request.

### Scope of Services

The pairing of legal representation and interdisciplinary support is often referred to as an *inter- or multi-disciplinary approach*. The two pillars of this approach are:

1. High-quality legal services – legal representation provided by salaried attorneys who work with an interdisciplinary team
2. Interdisciplinary supports - additional professionals on the legal team, such as social workers and peer mentors, who engage and support the client in meeting their non-legal needs

Table 1 provides a list of suggested positions to implement this approach. DHS and the Courts anticipate that the Successful Proposer will design an organizational structure that fits within their organization while optimizing the quality, timeliness, and comprehensiveness of legal representation and interdisciplinary supports provided to clients. Therefore, the Successful Proposer may combine, eliminate or rename positions as long as all core services are provided. We estimate that each full-time attorney will have an annual caseload of 87,<sup>3</sup> or about 40 at any given time.

**Table 1. Core Services and Suggested Positions**

| Core Service                                   | Suggested Position        | Suggested Core Job Responsibilities  |
|--|---------------------------|--|
| High-quality legal representation and services | Managing Attorney         | Supervise and direct all staff attorneys   |
|  | Attorney                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Represent clients in dependency or TPR cases</li> <li>• Collaborate closely with interdisciplinary team members</li> <li>• Staff shelter hearings on a rotating basis</li> </ul>  |
|  | Paralegal/Legal Assistant | Provide legal and administrative support to the legal team   |
| Interdisciplinary Supports                     | Managing Social Worker    | Supervise and direct all interdisciplinary staff   |
|  | Social Worker             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide clinical expertise to the legal team</li> <li>• Provide clinical support to clients by performing assessments, developing individually tailored service plans and referring clients to service providers</li> </ul> |
|  | Peer Mentor               | Provide support, guidance and encouragement to parents to foster awareness of their rights and responsibilities as it relates to their case; meanwhile, assisting parents with meeting their reunification goals.  |

<sup>3</sup> See [Standards of Practice for Parents' Lawyers, Guardians Ad Litem and Legal Counsel practicing in Child Welfare Dependency Cases in Pennsylvania](#)

CCP should be designed to maximize client engagement. We envision a variety of approaches that a Proposer may take to engage clients and are interested in creative engagement strategies. However, at a minimum, the Proposer must employ the following engagement strategies:

- Within 3 business days of receiving a referral, the Successful Proposer must contact the client to discuss next steps.
- A team member (attorney, social worker or peer mentor) must contact the client at least monthly, or more frequently as circumstances dictate.
- A team member will make every effort to attend meetings with bearing on, but peripheral to, a client's dependency case (e.g., housing issues, criminal case involvement, education issues involving a client's child)

CCP should be designed to serve a diverse population with expertise and compassion. All clients should feel welcomed, well-served and supported, inclusive of their race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (SOGIE), intellectual or physical ability, criminal history, diagnosis, English language proficiency or life experiences.

### **Staff Training and Qualifications**

DHS and the Courts seek a Successful Proposer with a strong plan to recruit and train qualified candidates.

The Attorneys should have: a commitment to high-quality, compassionate representation of parents and legal custodians; relevant experience in child welfare matters; and strong interpersonal skills to maintain positive relationships with a diverse population. The Attorneys must have graduated from an ABA-accredited law school, have a Pennsylvania bar license in good standing, be familiar with Pennsylvania standards on parent representation and other dependency-specific resources,<sup>4</sup> and maintain Act 33, 34 and FBI clearances.

The Social Workers should have at least a bachelor's degree in social work or a relevant field, experience working within the context of the child welfare system and/or working and providing support to families and youth with diverse backgrounds and experiences, familiarity with national standards of social work,<sup>5</sup> and a commitment to continuously developing cultural competence. The Social Workers must maintain Act 33, 34 and FBI clearances.

### **Anticipated Outcomes**

DHS and the Courts anticipate that the successful implementation of interdisciplinary CCP will lead to the following outcomes for clients, their families and the County:

---

<sup>4</sup> See [Standards of Practice for Parents' Lawyers, Guardians Ad Litem and Legal Counsel practicing in Child Welfare Dependency Cases in Pennsylvania](#); [Mission and Guiding Principles of PA Dependency System](#) ; [Pennsylvania's CORE 1: An Attorney's Introduction to Pennsylvania's Dependency System](#) ; [The Pennsylvania Dependency Benchbook](#)

<sup>5</sup> See National Association of Social Workers' (NASW) [Standards for Social Work Practice in Child Welfare](#) and NASW's [Code of Ethics](#) for client navigation and decision making, and [Standards for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice](#).



- Increased quality of representation as a result of the attorney’s collaboration with interdisciplinary team members and access to full-time administrative and paralegal staff support
- Increased client engagement with their case and social services
- Increased client satisfaction with legal representation
- Improved time to permanency and case closure
- Increased percentage of cases resulting in reunification

### **Data Collection and Reporting**

The Successful Proposer is expected to collect and report client-level program data through the Key Information Demographics System (KIDS) or other DHS-identified system(s). At a minimum, data will include:

- Client referrals received
- Clients served, including demographics by race, gender and age
- Case reason
- Case goals
- Attorney assigned to each case
- Parent or custodian presence at hearings
- Dates of case opening and closure
- Staff contacts with clients, by date and type

### **Budget**

We intend to enter into an Agreement with one Successful Proposer. DHS will consider all proposed costs for reasonableness and negotiate the final budget with the Successful Proposer(s) through Allegheny County’s contracting process. To assist Proposers in creating their proposed budget, we have provided a template available on the [Active Solicitations Webpage](#) and the [RFP Opportunity Page](#).

## **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 95 points, as outlined in the following sections.

### **Organizational Capacity (20 Points)**

- Experience serving the client population, either in a social services capacity, legal capacity or both (10 points)
- Strong history of collaboration with the service sectors detailed in Section 2 “Organizational Capacity” (5 Points)
- Centralized office location accessible by public transit with private space to meet with clients (5 points)

### **Scope of Services (25 Points)**

- Project plan and timeline for implementation within 6 months of award date (10 points)
- Organizational chart that includes the Core Services and Suggested Positions defined in Section 2, Table 1 “Core Services and Suggested Positions.” Proposers may combine, eliminate or rename positions with accompanying explanations. If applicable, please include existing positions in your organization that will directly or indirectly support CCP. (5 points)
- Centralized intake and assignment process for all cases. The case assignment process should detail how assignments will relate to existing child welfare/dependency regions and courtrooms (See Appendix A) (5 points)
- Concrete plan to make services accessible and welcoming for all clients, inclusive of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (SOGIE), intellectual or physical ability, criminal history, diagnosis, English language proficiency or life experiences. (5 Points)

### **Client Engagement Scenarios (20 Points)**

- Description of your strategy to engage and support individuals in each the following four scenarios, further described in the Response Form. Include a description of what you foresee to be the greatest challenges and which, if any, partners you envision engaging.
  - Scenario 1: Client was minimally involved in the child's life previously, but now wants more involvement (5 points)
  - Scenario 2: Client has not responded after three outreach attempts via phone (5 points)
  - Scenario 3: Client is simultaneously involved with the criminal justice system, with pending criminal charges relating to the dependency case (5 points)
  - Scenario 4: Client is experiencing behavioral health issues (5 points)

### **Staff Training and Qualifications (10 Points)**

- Plan to recruit and retain qualified, diverse staff (5 points)
- Plan for staff training, including how staff will receive new-hire and ongoing training (5 points)

### **Data Collection and Reporting (10 Points)**

- Plan for collecting and reporting the client-level data indicators listed in Section 2, “Data Collection and Reporting,” including the software system you plan to use. If applicable, please include any indicators you expect to track above and beyond those described in the RFP, and how you would collect them (10 points)

### **Budget (10 Points)**

- Detailed line-item annual budget that reflects a realistic estimate of the costs associated with implementing and sustaining CCP. If any startup costs are identified, they should be submitted as a separate budget (5 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 Submit a Proposal**

- 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)
- 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/>.
- Collaborative Proposals
  - Collaborative Proposals, in which two or more entities partner to apply together, are permitted. Collaborative Proposals can include:
    - 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.
    - 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.
- 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 (MWDBE) 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, August 22, 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).

#### 4.2 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, August 9, 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, August 15, 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.

### 4.3 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.

### 4.4 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).

### 4.5 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](#).

### 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 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](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).