



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS:

Open Access Project Evaluation

Release Date: August 28, 2024

Pre-Proposal Conference: September 4, 2024

Proposals Due: September 25, 2024 at 5:00 p.m. EDT

Anticipated Award Notification: December 6, 2024

Anticipated Contract Start: February 1, 2025

Issued by:

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REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Open Access Project Evaluation

I. Overview of the Project

A. Overview of BHSB

Behavioral Health System Baltimore, Inc. (BHSB) is a non-profit organization tasked by Baltimore City to manage the city's public behavioral health system. As such, BHSB serves as the local behavioral health authority for Baltimore City. In this role, BHSB envisions a city where people live and thrive in communities that promote and support behavioral health and wellness.

BHSB is committed to enhancing the behavioral health and wellness of individuals, families, and communities through:

- The promotion of behavioral health and wellness prevention, early intervention, treatment, and recovery;
- The creation and leadership of an integrated network of providers that promotes universal access to comprehensive, data-driven services; and
- Advocacy and leadership of behavioral health-related efforts to align resources, programs, and policy.

BHSB is committed to promoting behavioral health equity in Baltimore City by ensuring that the behavioral health provider network is culturally and linguistically responsive to the diverse populations served; reducing behavioral health care access barriers for populations known to experience discrimination and marginalization; and supporting communities directly to develop services that are responsive to their unique strengths and needs.

B. Overview of Project

Through this Request for Proposals (RFP) and on behalf of the Central Maryland Regional Crisis System, BHSB is seeking a consultant to evaluate the value and sustainability of the Open Access Project.

The Central Maryland Regional Crisis System is a public-private partnership that is investing \$45 million over five years (2020-2025) in behavioral health infrastructure and services in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Carroll County, and Howard County. BHSB serves as the Regional Administrative Manager for this partnership. After the initial grant period, the project will be sustained through other funding sources.

The four components of the Central Maryland Regional Crisis system are:

- Creation of a new regional, no wrong door 988 Call Center

- Expansion of Mobile Crisis Teams
- Increased availability of Open Access behavioral health services
- Improved community engagement

The Open Access Project provided one-year seed funding to outpatient behavioral health programs to support flexible scheduling for same-day or next day appointments for clinicians to see individuals who have an urgent behavioral health need. The array of services includes counseling, screening, de-escalation and stabilization support, assessment, prescribing if appropriate, and facilitating engagement in ongoing treatment.

There were three cohorts of Open Access clinics that received seed funding to implement Open Access:

- 1) Cohort 1: 5 clinics from April 2022 - March 2023
- 2) Cohort 2: 13 clinics from September 2022 – August 2023
- 3) Cohort 3: 17 clinics from January 2024 - December 2024

The goal of the Open Access Project is to give consumers more control and convenience over their behavioral health services while increasing system capacity to address behavioral health emergencies in a community setting. Open Access appointments are available to anyone who presents with an urgent behavioral health need. The 988 Regional Helpline also refers consumers to the Open Access appointments through a secure portal.

There are 35 clinic locations that received seed funding to participate in the Open Access Project and assistance from a consultant. The consultant provided technical assistance for two phases of the project:

- During the first six months, sites participated in assessments, workplan development, staff training, and identifying the optimal number of days and/or hours to offer Open Access appointments.
- During the second six months, sites tested how Open Access appointments work in operation and developed a sustainability plan for continuing availability of Open Access beyond the pilot year.

Most clinic locations continued using the Open Access model after the conclusion of the pilot year.

This evaluation will explore whether the Open Access model has improved access and quality of care and whether the model is self-sustaining or needs additional resources to be sustainable. Determining the project's successes and challenges will inform if resources are needed to support or expand the Open Access model and if these resources would be a good investment.

C. Scope of Service

This evaluation will examine the following domains:

- Consumer experience
- Staff experience
 - Front office staff or anyone else involved in the processing Open Access referrals
 - Therapists and psychiatrists
 - Referring staff (988 counselors and mobile crisis clinicians)
- Access
 - Length of time from referral to intake
 - Length of time from referral to first available appointment
- Revenue generation
- Overall sustainability of the model based on the above findings

The selected evaluator will have access to data collected by the Open Access consultant, which includes the following from most clinics that received seed funding to implement this model:

- total open access appointments scheduled
- no-show data
- average consumer wait time to first appointment
- average consumer wait time to second appointment
- average consumer wait time to prescriber visit
- total number and average number of consumers served through open access per week
- total clinic hours devoted to Open Access per week
- total billable encounters served through Open Access per week
- number of consumers who completed the appointments provided in their initial authorization
- monthly billable hours for Open Access
- brief consumer satisfaction survey (2-3 questions) at each visit analyzed by the consultant
- and therapist, prescriber and front desk satisfaction survey conducted by the consultant.

The evaluator will also have access to data collected in Behavioral Health Link, the “care traffic control” platform where referrals are made from the 988 Regional Helpline, which includes:

- number of total referrals made
- number of referrals accepted by each clinic
- number of referrals not accepted by each clinic
- reason codes for referrals that were not accepted for each clinic

- outcome of referrals that were accepted for each clinic (available for Cohort 3 clinics only)

The evaluator will also have access to the participating clinics' sustainability plans created at the conclusion of the project. These plans include key performance indicators related to the staffing model, the number of scheduled Open Access appointments offered and completed, and the number of 988 Regional Helpline referrals accepted and received. Evaluators will also have access to "secret shopper" data collected by the Open Access consultant. "Secret shopper" calls entail the consultant calling each Open Access clinic to assess the information received about Open Access when inquiring about an appointment.

The above data will be used by the evaluator to determine whether the Open Access model helped:

- increase timely access to services for consumers
- better utilize existing capacity
- reduce average consumer wait time
- increase average intake of consumers
- increase the provider practice net income
- reduce average provider practice costs
- reduce average costs per consumer

D. Focus Population

The selected evaluator will review data collected by the consultant and recorded in Behavioral Health Link. Clinics operating under this model offer comprehensive services, addressing both mental health and substance use disorders. Consumers can access therapy and medication management, with some substance use clinics also providing medication-assisted treatment.

E. Staffing Requirements

There are no staffing requirements.

F. Funding Availability

There is up to \$131,400 one-time funding through the Maryland Health Services Cost Review Commission for the Central Maryland Crisis Response System available for this contract. It will not be eligible for renewal. The contract with the selected applicant will have a contract term of February 1, 2025 - December 31, 2025. Eligible uses of the funding include salary associated with evaluators, administrative support staff, indirect costs, and/or consultant fees.

G. Quality and Financial Review

As part of BHSB's procurement process, internal quality and financial reviews are completed to ensure there are no significant concerns with the organization being selected. Applicants should be sure to provide the most recent available versions of all requested documentation with their RFP application in order to ensure this is a smooth process.

H. Contracting with BHSB

Applicants selected through this process will enter into a contractual agreement with BHSB. Following a notification of selection, BHSB will issue a Letter of Award that provides details about the contract and the process for executing it. The selected organization will be required to submit a new budget on BHSB's budget forms, which will be reviewed for allowable costs under the grant.

Please note that applicants may be asked to change their budgets and/or details of their proposals even if the proposal was selected for funding. Applicants new to BHSB's contract process are encouraged to review relevant forms available on our website here: <https://www.bhsbaltimore.org/for-providers/forms-for-providers>.

Contract Type and Payment

The contract and payment type that will result from this procurement is described below. Applicants are encouraged to consider whether their organization will be able to operate with this payment mechanism before applying for these funds.

- Consultant
 - Issued to a person or entity engaged in independent work as outlined in the contract. The total cost of the contract is based on a calculation that includes an hourly consultant rate and the estimated number of hours it will take to complete the scope of work.
 - Payment is based on the costs reported for a specific period (e.g., hourly rate x # of hours worked that month).

BHSB issues payments once per month. Applicants should note that submitting required documents and reports late can result in delayed payment.

Contract Monitoring and Technical Assistance

Selected applicants will be required to submit regular program and financial reports to BHSB using an electronic contract management system. BHSB will review these reports to monitor progress and contract compliance throughout the contract term.

Program reports include an update on progress toward deliverables (e.g., number of people served, number of services delivered, etc.). Some program reports may also require organizations to attach a data report with additional information (e.g., consumer demographic information, process and/or outcomes data, etc.). BHSB

monitors progress on these reports throughout the contract term and may offer technical assistance and support if deliverables are not being met.

Financial reports are required to generate payment and involve submitting actual expenditures or invoices (depending on the contract type) and to monitor spending compared to the budget or award amount. If organizations are spending more or less than expected awarded throughout the contract term, BHSB may offer technical assistance and support to ensure the funding covers the contract term fully and BHSB may reduce funding if all funds are not likely to be expended by the end of the contract term.

Please note that submitting program or financial reports late can result in delayed payment.

Verification of Services

BHSB audits all contracts to review whether the requirements set forth in the contract were completed as reported and that relevant federal, state, and local regulations were followed. This generally occurs after the conclusion of the contract period. Audits may be conducted remotely through a review of documents submitted to BHSB or on-site at the organization's location. Failure by vendors to comply with the terms of any contract with BHSB may result in denial of future contracts with BHSB.

Applicants should be aware of best practices in documenting both programmatic and financial activities to aid in an efficient audit.

II. Overview of RFP

A. Purpose of RFP

The purpose of this RFP is to select a consultant to evaluate the value and sustainability of the Open Access Project. This evaluation will explore whether the Open Access model has improved access and quality of care and whether the model is self-sustaining or needs additional resources to be sustainable. Determining the project's successes and challenges will inform if resources are needed to support or expand the Open Access model and if these resources would be a good investment.

B. Applicant Eligibility

Applicants must meet the criteria outlined below to be considered eligible to be selected through this RFP process:

- In Good Standing with the Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation (If the selected applicant's business is registered in a state other than Maryland, they will be required to register in Maryland as part of the contracting process.)

C. Proposal Timeline and Specifications

1. Timeline

Release Date:	August 28, 2024
Pre-Proposal Conference:	September 4, 2024 at 9:30 a.m.
Proposal Due:	September 25, 2024, at 5:00 p.m. EDT
Anticipated Award Notification:	December 6, 2024
Anticipated Contract Start:	February 1, 2025

2. Pre-Proposal Conference

Date: September 4, 2024

Time: 9:30 am

Location: Microsoft Teams meeting - Join on your computer or mobile app

Click [here](#) to join the meeting

Or call in (audio only): +1 443-819-0973

Phone Conference ID: 636 747 720#

Please join five minutes early to leave time to troubleshoot. If you have any problems accessing the meeting, please contact Procurements@BHSBaltimore.org.

All questions related to this RFP should be submitted in advance to Procurements@BHSBaltimore.org no later than noon on **September 3, 2024**. There may be time at the end of the meeting to ask additional questions, depending on the number of questions submitted.

Questions posed prior to or during the Pre-Proposal Conference and BHSB's responses will be posted on BHSB's website at <https://www.bhsbaltimore.org/for-providers/funding-opportunities/> by **September 11, 2024**.

Individuals who submitted questions and/or attended the Pre-Proposal Conference will be notified by email when questions and answers are posted on BHSB's website.

Questions received after this conference cannot be answered.

3. Proposal Due Date, Time, and Location

BHSB uses Survey Monkey Apply (SM Apply) to manage applications. All proposals must be submitted through this system. Applicants must register with the system ahead of time and submit narrative and supporting documents directly through the system. You are able to save your application and continue working on it before submitting it. BHSB encourages all applicants to test this system well in advance of submitting proposals.

Applicants can access SM Apply here: <https://bhsb.smapply.org/>

All proposals must be received no later than **5:00 pm EDT on September 25, 2024**. All submitted proposals become the property of BHSB. If you are having technical troubles related to submitting your proposal, contact BHSB before the due date/time at Procurements@BHSBaltimore.org

Proposals submitted after the due date/time cannot be considered.

4. Authorized Contact

Applicants are advised that the authorized contact person for all matters concerning this RFP is Lynn Mumma, whose contact information is listed below.

Lynn Mumma, Procurement Lead
Email: Procurements@BHSBaltimore.org

5. Anticipated Service Term:

February 1, 2025 – December 31, 2025 and will not be eligible for renewal.

D. Award of Contract

The submission of a proposal does not, in any way, guarantee an award. BHSB is not responsible for any costs incurred related to the preparation of a proposal in response to this RFP. BHSB reserves the right to withdraw an award prior to execution of a contract with a selected applicant in BHSB's sole and absolute discretion.

BHSB will select the most qualified and responsive applicants through this RFP process. BHSB will enter into a contract with selected applicants following the notification of award. All selected applicants must comply with all terms and conditions applicable to contracts executed by BHSB.

E. RFP Postponement/Cancellation

BHSB reserves the right to postpone or cancel this RFP, in whole or in part.

F. Applicant Appeal Process

Applications must be complete and fully responsive to the below Proposal Narrative Outline and must include all required appendices. Applicants may file an appeal within five days of notification of non-selection. BHSB will not review new proposal materials that were not included in the application. BHSB will review the appeal letter and respond to the non-selected applicant within ten working days of receipt of the appeal.

G. Governing Law and Vaccination Mandates

The applicant acknowledges and agrees that BHSB is a federal contractor for purposes of Executive Order 14042, Ensuring Adequate COVID Safety Protocols for Federal Contractors (the "Order"). The applicant and its subcontractors shall comply with the Order and all other applicable mandates, rules, laws, and regulations (collectively, the "Requirements"). Upon request by BHSB, selected applicants shall promptly provide evidence of compliance with the Requirements and shall promptly take such further actions as may be requested by BHSB with respect to the Requirements and/or the resulting contract. The applicant and all of its subcontractors shall, for the duration of the resulting contract, comply with all guidance for contractor and subcontractor workplace locations published by the Safer Federal Workforce Task Force. These requirements shall be incorporated into all subcontracts of the sub-vendor.

III. Format and Content of Proposal

A. Proposal Instructions

- Applicants must submit all required information using Survey Monkey Apply (SM Apply) accessible here: <https://bhsb.smapply.org/>. We recommend you start your application early, so you know what to expect with the system. ***Late proposals will not be considered.***
- Generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools are becoming increasingly prevalent. While AI is a helpful administrative tool, it is important to ensure that proposals reflect authentic responses and realistic service delivery plans.
- It is the policy of BHSB to adhere to the rules and regulations in the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), which require appropriate safeguards to protect the confidentiality, integrity and security of all protected health information. No proposals submitted in response to this RFP should include individually identifiable health information.

For more information, please refer to the Guide to IT Privacy and Security of Electronic Health Information: <https://www.healthit.gov/topic/privacy-security-and-hipaa/health-it-privacy-and-security-resources-providers>.

B. Proposal Narrative Outline and Rating Criteria

The outline below shows the information being requested for applications and how points will be awarded during the review. Use SM Apply to submit your responses. See the instructions for more information about how to submit proposals.

1. Organizational Background and Capacity (20 points)

- a. Provide an overview of your organization, including its history, mission, and overall purpose.
- b. Describe your organization's experience conducting public health evaluations similar to this project.
- c. Describe your organization's experience meeting contractual deliverables and obligations (including any contracts with BHSB), and your capacity to submit reports and invoices on time.
- d. Describe your understanding of how the crisis services continuum integrates with Baltimore City's behavioral health system.

2. Principles and Values (10 points)

- a. Describe your organization's commitment to racial and social justice and health equity. Include specific examples of what your organization does to illustrate this commitment.
- b. Provide examples of culturally competent strategies you've used in previous evaluation processes.

3. Service Delivery (20 points)

- a. Describe your organization's plan to provide all services as outlined in the Scope of Service section of this RFP.
- b. Attach a sample evaluation report that includes recommendations.

4. Staffing Plan (10 points)

- a. Describe your organization's staffing plan, including the staff expertise and experience to support the completion of this evaluation process.

5. Program Evaluation and Quality Assurance (20 points)

- a. Describe how you propose using the data collected by the consultant and recorded in Behavioral Health Link (detailed in the Scope of Service section) to inform the evaluation and how you will analyze and present it.
- b. Specify how consumers' Protected Health Information will be, maintained, used, and disclosed in compliance with (i) The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (42 U.S.C. 1320d et seq. and implementing regulations at 45 CFR parts 160 and 164) as amended, (ii) the Confidentiality of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Records (42 U.S.C. 290dd-2, as implemented by 42 CFR part 2) as amended; and (iii) the Maryland Confidentiality of Medical Records Act (Md. Code Ann. Health-General Section 4-301 et seq.) as amended.

6. Proposed Program Budget (10 points)

- a. Attach a line-item budget for the grant period in the RFP that includes anticipated revenue from grant funding and fee-for-service reimbursement and all expenses as an appendix. BHSB has budget forms on its website that can be used but are not required for this submission. (Link: [FY21-Budget-Forms-Cost-Reimbursement.xlsx](https://www.bhsb.org/FY21-Budget-Forms-Cost-Reimbursement.xlsx) [live.com](https://www.bhsb.org/live.com))
- b. Provide a budget narrative/justification that explains revenue and expense projections in more detail. The budget narrative should be included in the body of your proposal, not as an appendix.

7. Implementation Timeline (10 points)

- a. Provide a detailed timeline for implementation that includes all of the activities that you have committed to perform in your proposal. Show an outline of all the steps necessary to fully operationalize this project and by when each step would be completed. Contracts are expected to start on February 1, 2025.

8. Appendices

- Organizational chart
- Resume or curriculum vitae for individuals/consultants working on this project
- Line-Item Budget
- Most recent final Financial Audit package including Findings and Management Letter from an independent auditor (preferred) OR a recent unaudited Income Statement AND Balance Sheet, if an audit is not available.
- Most recent IRS 990 – Return of Organization Exempt from Income Taxes or the most recent Business or Personal Tax Return if an IRS 990 form is not required to be filed
- Certificate of Good Standing from the Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation (screenshots from the MDAT website will not be accepted) - the certificate must be dated within one year of the RFP submission due date. (If the selected applicant's business is registered in a state other than Maryland, they will be required to register in Maryland as part of the contracting process.)