

## **REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP): *One-Time Funding for Small Projects***

Pre-Proposal Conference Held: August 13, 2019 | 9:30 am – 11:00 am  
Behavioral Health System Baltimore, Inc. (BHSB)  
100 South Charles Street, Tower II, Floor 8  
Baltimore, Maryland 21201

### **BHSB Facilitators:**

Shanna Borell, Special Projects Manager  
Beata Siakowska, Director of Grants Accounting  
Jacqueline Camper, Quality Coordinator  
Tiffinee Scott, Youth Empowerment & Communities That Care Coordinator

## **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

Posted: August 20, 2019

Shanna Borell welcomed the group, and attendees introduced themselves by sharing their names and organizations.

Shanna provided an overview of BHSB and its procurement process for this Request for Proposals (RFP):

- BHSB is the local behavioral health authority for Baltimore City and oversees the network of public behavioral health services. Open and competitive procurements are an important part of how BHSB builds an effective and responsive system of care.
- BHSB will use an internal Review Committee to review, rate, and rank eligible proposals and make recommendations for funding. BHSB's executive leadership will make final approvals. This funding source requires additional approval from the Maryland Department of Health, Behavioral Health Administration (BHA), so BHSB will prepare a request with the selected proposals. BHSB will notify applicants whether their proposals were included in BHSB's request to BHA. Final approval from BHA is anticipated in February or March of 2020 at which point final selection or non-selection letters will be issued.
- For this RFP, all proposals must be submitted using the One-Time Funding Request Form, which is located on BHSB's website here: <https://www.bhsbaltimore.org/for-providers/funding-opportunities/>. Applicants are encouraged to write clearly and comprehensively so that proposal reviewers can award as many points as possible. The review committee will make their recommendations based only on what is included in the proposal using the rating criteria shown on the form.



Please note the following changes were tracked in the RFP document posted on BHSB's website:

- The One-Time Funding Request Form was referred to as One-Time Funding *Proposal* Form, which has been updated.
- The funding period in the RFP is noted as March 2020 – June 2020. BHSB anticipates award notifications happening as early as March, with contracts being executed in April 2020. A few edits were made to clarify this.

Applicants selected through this procurement process will enter into a contract with BHSB. The below information was provided to potential applicants to know what to expect with that process.

- Awardees will receive a Letter of Award that provides details such as the award amount and directions to complete the contract process.
- Awardees will be directed to submit a budget on BHSB's budget form, which is available for review on BHSB's website here: <https://www.bhsbaltimore.org/for-providers/forms-for-providers/#budget-forms>.
- Once the budget is reviewed and approved, BHSB will send the full contract for execution. BHSB uses an electronic signature process, and contracts should be signed by the awardee's official signatory.
- BHSB uses an online Contract Management System (CMS), which awardees will use to submit both programmatic and financial reports during the contract term. Awardees new to contracting with BHSB will receive training and technical assistance on how to use this system.

Beata Siakowska provided an overview of financial reporting requirements and some unique aspects of this funding:

- All expenses will be reimbursed following the approval of the awardee's financial reports and supporting documentation. Financial reports must be submitted through CMS, BHSB's Contract Management System. The submission will require an upload of receipts, invoices etc. These reports with documentation will be due by the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month following the reporting period. For example, the financial report for June is due on July 15<sup>th</sup>.
- Awardees will also be required to submit an Annual Report 440, which is used to reconcile all expenditures and payments at the end of the contract. Even though these contracts will only be for 3-4 months, all awardees are still expected to complete this report. This report will be due by July 31.
- Depending on the type of project being funded, awardees can report monthly on expenses or just one time at the end of the contract term. BHSB will work with awardees to determine the reporting schedule.
- Please note that all expenses must occur within the contract term. In other words, you cannot pre-pay for anything or receive reimbursement for expenses that occurred prior to the funding period.



Jacqueline Camper provided an overview of how BHSB will verify expenses after the funding period:

- BHSB will work with awardees to verify that expenses reported to BHSB have been documented. BHSB will look for itemized receipts, invoices, etc. and may take pictures of items purchased.
- BHSB may verify expenses in person (on-site) or remotely.

## Questions and Answers

*Questions and answers have been edited for clarity and conciseness. Funding "request" and "proposal" are used interchangeably throughout.*

### **Submitted via email: is the funding period really only March 2020 to June 2020, just four months?**

Yes. BHSB anticipates receiving final approval from BHA in February or March of 2020, and all proposals must be completed by the end of June 2020. BHSB realizes this is a short funding period, and applicants are encouraged to submit proposals/requests that will reasonably fit within that timeframe.

### **Submitted via email and expanded on during the meeting: Please advise me on how I can obtain a Certificate of Good Standing? How old can the Certificate of Good Standing be?**

Applicants can obtain a certificate of good standing from the Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation website (<https://dat.maryland.gov/Pages/default.aspx>) and click on "Order a Certificate of Status". Applicants are not required to purchase the actual certificate; they can save or print the screen that shows that the organization is in good standing.

For applicants who have recently ordered the actual certificate, BHSB will accept them from up to one year ago. However, if the status has changed since it was purchased, organizations should submit the most recent status.

If this requirement does not apply to your organization, please tell BHSB why it is not applicable. BHSB may request additional documentation.

### **Submitted via email and edited for anonymity: We coordinate a project with another organization each year and would like to request funding for materials. Should we submit a joint proposal on behalf of both organizations or should both organizations submit separate requests?**

A single proposal/request can be submitted as long as one organization will take the lead in terms of contracting with BHSB, receiving the funding, and making the purchases. It should be clear in the funding request which



organization will take the lead. If both organizations wish to have separate contracts, then two funding requests should be submitted.

**Submitted via email: the Baltimore City Fire Department is requesting organizations with recovery residences acquire pull stations for the housing units. Would this be an acceptable use of the funds?**

Yes, as long as the item can be a one-time purchase and does not require ongoing maintenance costs.

**We would like to waterproof the basement of one of our housing properties, would that be an allowable cost? Housing is for provided for people with mental illness.**

Capital improvement or renovation costs should be under \$20,000 each, but are allowable costs for this funding as long as they can be completed within the contract period.

**You mentioned that BHSB generally does not fund ongoing salaries through this RFP, would stipends for specific tasks be allowed? Could we use stipends to fund peers to participate in various activities?**

Yes, stipends or other rate-based payment for services or work is allowable.

**For conferences or trainings, can we only attend or host them during the contract period?**

Yes, applicants can request funding to send staff, program participants, youth, etc. to conferences/trainings or request funding to host their own conference/training, but it must occur during the funding period. Applicants cannot request funding to pre-pay for training or receive reimbursement for a training that was paid for before the funding period. The actual conference/training must take place during the funding period (anticipated March 2020 to June 2020).

**Could we request funding for a website and pre-pay a year of web hosting?**

BHSB cannot fund any requests that include pre-paying for services. You could request funding to build a website, but would need to show that your organization could support the ongoing costs of maintaining it.

**How long does BHSB's contracting process take? If we receive notification in March, when will we have an executed contract?**

Once an organization receives a Letter of Award from BHSB, they must submit a budget, which will be reviewed and approved by a Grants



Accountant. If the budget can be approved as submitted (i.e., does not require any modifications), then the awardee will receive their full contract for execution. This involves having the signatory review the contract and sign it. BHSB attempts to be as responsive as possible, but how quickly contracts can be executed can depend on many factors.

**If my organization has subsidiaries we want to fund, is that okay?**

Applicants are allowed to include a subsidiary organization, but should be very clear about the relationship between the two organizations and how funding will flow. BHSB may request additional documentation or want to have a phone call with organizations prior to contracting to ensure everyone understands what will be expected by all parties.

**Can awardees take pictures of events to share with BHSB to verify that services were completed?**

Awardees can take pictures to share with BHSB, but it will not take the place of other verification activities BHSB engages in, which will mostly likely happen after the funding period is over.

**Why is the funding period so short?**

This is unique funding that has specific requirements. The nature of this funding does not allow for a longer funding period, which is why applicants are encouraged to keep their proposals/requests small so that they can be implemented in the shorter timeframe.

**If we have other ideas for services or projects, can we submit proposals outside of this?**

BHSB identifies awardees through open competitive procurement processes, so proposals submitted outside of an official procurement are very unlikely to receive funding. BHSB announces all funding opportunities on its website here: <https://www.bhsbaltimore.org/for-providers/funding-opportunities/> and emails them through its mailing list. You can sign up for the mailing list on the bottom of every page of the website.

**If we show collaboration in our proposal/request, is that considered positive?**

It depends on the type of funding request. In general, collaboration is considered a good thing, but it may not benefit every request. Proposals are not specifically given extra points for collaboration, but it may strengthen some proposals.

**Is it possible for proposals/requests to be partially funded?**



Yes, it is possible that some requests could be partially funded.

Applicants can submit multiple requests, and each request should be submitted on its own One-Time Funding Request Form. Similar or related requests can go on a single form (e.g., new computers and software), but different requests should go on different forms, which will be rated separately. For more information, see page 4 of the RFP document.

**Is there a maximum amount each organization can request?**

There is no specific limit on the amount of funding that can be requested. Page 5 of the RFP document notes that past awards have ranged from \$500-\$100,000. Applicants should be mindful of their capacity to implement their project in the timeframe allowed to determine the amount they request. Very large requests that would prevent BHSB from making several awards may not be approved.

**How many awards were given out last year? What was the total amount awarded last year? What was awarded?**

BHSB is not prepared to share this information publicly right now but will consider public notifications of awards in the future. The list of examples provided on page 4 of the RFP document is a good representation of funded proposals from last year's RFP.

**You mentioned that proposals will be screened for eligibility; since this procurement is open to all types of organizations, what will that screening include?**

All request forms will be screened for the following, which is outlined on page 7 of the RFP document:

- The proposal is submitted on the One-Time Funding Request Form
- The proposal is received on time
- The proposal includes an obvious benefit to the behavioral health and wellness of people in Baltimore City

**Will applicants be given feedback on proposals that are not selected for funding?**

Non-selection letters will include an opportunity to request additional feedback on your proposal. BHSB will schedule a phone call or meeting to provide that feedback.

**Does it help to show past experience receiving grants and a capacity to implement them?**



Yes, it helps to show your organization's capacity to implement and complete the request. However, organizations are not required to have received grant funding in the past.

### **Where can we find the Human Service Agreements Manual?**

There is a link to it on page 4 of the RFP document, and here is the direct URL: [https://health.maryland.gov/docs/HSAM\\_093005.pdf](https://health.maryland.gov/docs/HSAM_093005.pdf).

### **Do you have any tips for applicants who have not prepared grant proposals before?**

Be as clear as possible. The Review Committee will only have the information that is in the proposal, so make sure it is clear what you want the funding for, why you want or need the funding, and how it will benefit people. It may be helpful to have someone read the proposal who knows nothing about it to see if they can understand it.

### **If we can show that funding for an employee salary will support the implementation of a project and only that project, can we include it?**

In the past, BHSB has been cautious to support employee salaries through one-time funding opportunities. Employee salaries should have sustainable funding sources, and one-time funding should not supplement an already full-time salary. However, BHSB will consider salary costs that clearly show that an employee's time will be used to implement the project for the amount of time specified in the proposal. Funding should not be used to supplement an employee's full-time salary. Proposals should be as clear as possible.

### **Can we request funding for gift cards to incentivize young people attending a training or event?**

Gift cards are an allowable cost, but need to be tracked very carefully and clearly. BHSB will want to verify that all gift cards were used appropriately, so consider how you will document their use. Please also note that all gift cards need to be distributed during the funding period. They cannot be purchased ahead of time to be used later.

### **We are moving our office, but not during the specified timeframe. Could we purchase furniture for the new office during the funding period, but have it delivered after the funding period.**

As long as the furniture is purchased (and paid for) within the funding period, it is allowable to have it delivered to the new location at the time of the move.



**The project we want to request funding for has many steppingstones and background that got us to this point. Should we include that background in our proposal?**

If it will help BHSB understand the project or it will help justify the project, then that background could be helpful. Applicants should include any information that will help the review committee understand what the proposal is and why it is important. However, applicants are not required to include long narratives unless they are specifically relevant.

**Is travel an allowable expense? Can we purchase bus tokens? Can we purchase vehicles?**

Travel is an allowable expense. Bus tokens are allowable as long as they are used during the funding period (not pre-paid).

Vehicles are not likely to be approved. Although they are allowable under the Human Service Agreements Manual, BHSB has received guidance from BHA that vehicles will not be approved.

**How long should proposals be? Is there a page limit? Can we attach additional documents that the form references?**

All proposals should be submitted on the One-Time Funding Request Form, and applicants should use a separate One-Time Funding Request Form for each request. The fields will expand so you can type as much as you want onto that form or copy text from other documents into the form. There is no page limit, but applicants are encouraged to write clear and concise narrative.

If documents such as a brochure would help the review committee understand what is being requested, applicants may attach additional documents. However, they are not included in the rating criteria, so they will not count toward your proposal's score.

**Is there a specific format for the budget?**

There is no required format for the budget included with your proposal. A simple spreadsheet or table would suffice as long as it is clear what is being requested and why. BHSB does have budget forms that applicants may use its website here: <https://www.bhsbaltimore.org/for-providers/forms-for-providers/#budget-forms>.

**What is the specific definition of behavioral health and wellness BHSB is using to determine eligibility?**

BHSB is using a broad definition of behavioral health and wellness that includes mental illness and substance use disorders, social and emotional



well-being, and adjustment to society and the demands of life. It can include activities related to prevention/promotion, early intervention, treatment, and/or recovery. Activities can address Adverse Childhood Events (ACEs), trauma, and related factors.

**Will we be expected to report on the results of implementation? How successful the project was?**

There will be programmatic reporting requirements, which will be specified in the contract's Scope of Service as deliverables. The deliverables will vary depending on the type of project, but could include things like number of people served, number of items purchased, number of events held, etc.

**Is the One-Time Funding Request Form an online form?**

The One-Time Funding Request Form is a Word form that allows you to fill certain fields. You will complete this form and email it per the instructions on page 8 of the RFP document.

If applicants need help with the form, BHSB will provide technical assistance. We will not answer any questions related to the content of your form or whether your request will be approved. We can only help make sure the form is working correctly. This is to ensure all applicants have the same access to information and support.

**Received via email, but not answered during the Pre-Proposal Conference: would the purchase of equipment for the safety and security of our clients be an allowable expense under this funding opportunity?**

Yes, this would be an allowable expense. If the equipment requires significant installation or upgrades to the space (i.e., a capital improvement project), the total cost should be under \$20,000.

**End of Questions and Answers**