



# **REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS:**

## ***Open Access Consultant***

**Release Date: October 13, 2021**

**Pre-Proposal Conference: November 3, 2021, 11 am**

**Proposal Due: November 19, 2021, 12 pm**

**Anticipated Award Notification: January 4, 2022**

**Anticipated Contract Start: February 1, 2022**

**Issued by:**

Behavioral Health System Baltimore, Inc.  
100 South Charles Street, Tower II, 8<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Baltimore, Maryland 21201

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>I. Overview of the Project</b> .....	3
<b>A. OVERVIEW OF BHSB</b> .....	3
<b>B. OVERVIEW OF PROJECT</b> .....	3
<b>C. SCOPE OF SERVICE</b> .....	5
<b>D. FOCUS POPULATION</b> .....	6
<b>E. STAFFING REQUIREMENTS</b> .....	6
<b>F. FUNDING AVAILABILITY</b> .....	6
<b>G. CONTRACTING WITH BHSB</b> .....	7
<b>II. Overview of RFP</b> .....	9
<b>A. PURPOSE OF RFP</b> .....	9
<b>B. APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY</b> .....	9
<b>C. PROPOSAL TIMEFRAME AND SPECIFICATIONS</b> .....	9
<b>D. AWARD OF CONTRACT</b> .....	10
<b>E. RFP POSTPONEMENT/CANCELLATION</b> .....	11
<b>F. APPLICANT APPEAL RIGHTS</b> .....	11
<b>III. Format and Content of Proposal</b> .....	12
<b>A. PROPOSAL INSTRUCTIONS</b> .....	12
<b>B. PROPOSAL NARRATIVE OUTLINE AND RATING CRITERIA</b> .....	12

# REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

## *Open Access Consultant*

### 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 Greater Baltimore Regional Integrated Crisis System (GBRICS) Partnership, BHSB is seeking a consultant to support community-based outpatient behavioral health providers in the GBRICS region to implement an Open Access model to expand access to services for people in immediate need of care.

The GBRICS Partnership is a public-private partnership that invests \$45 million over five years in behavioral health infrastructure and services in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Carroll County, and Howard County. BHSB serves as the Regional Administrative Manager for the GBRICS Partnership. The overall goal is to reduce unnecessary Emergency Department (ED) use and police interaction for

people in need of immediate access to behavioral health care. The four components of the GBRICS Partnership are:

- Creation of a new regional, no wrong door Behavioral Health Call Center
- Expansion of Mobile Crisis Teams
- Increased availability of Open Access behavioral health services
- Improved community engagement

Maryland has a robust network of community-based behavioral health providers within the public behavioral health system, and BHSB seeks to build on the strengths of this existing network by expanding access to a same-day basis, either in-person or virtually using a HIPAA<sup>1</sup> compliant telehealth platform, for both children and adults.

Open Access is an essential component of GBRICS to increase the system capacity to prevent behavioral health crises and address crisis situations within existing outpatient clinic settings by providing people with the means to immediately access services in these settings. Open Access models are not widely used currently, so this pilot will support programs in having clinician time reserved to see individuals who present or call for an appointment on the same or next day basis. The array of services to be included is counseling, screening, de-escalation and stabilization support, assessment, prescribing if appropriate, and facilitating engagement in ongoing treatment.

The GBRICS Open Access pilot will provide technical assistance, training, and seed funding to behavioral health providers that want to expand or begin to offer same-day open access services (virtual or in person), thus reducing delays in care or over use of EDs for “just in time” care.

The goals of the GBRICS Open Access pilot are:

1. Resolve immediate behavioral health needs for adults and children, preventing further escalation and the need for more intensive services.
2. Allow community-based behavioral health providers to see the benefits of Open Access models.
3. Position community-based behavioral health providers to be able to bill Medicaid and other payers for this enhanced access to services to sustain their Open Access hours even after their participation in the pilot program.
4. Demonstrate the demand for Open Access services in the region and advocate for Open Access at more clinics.

The GBRICS Partnership is adopting the “fail fast and move on” model from other industries to test and determine if the approach adds value for consumers,

---

<sup>1</sup> Health Insurance Portability and Accountability - <https://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/index.html>

providers, and payers; even if this Open Access “proof of concept” does not work, the exercise will be informative for all.

### **C. SCOPE OF SERVICE**

BHSB will contract with an organization experienced in providing technical assistance (TA) for practice transformation efforts to create Open Access workflows within behavioral health provider organizations.

BHSB will conduct a targeted solicitation to identify providers that want to receive TA, training, and seed funding to expand or begin to offer same-day open access services. BHSB anticipates that eligible providers will include community-based behavioral health clinics and Federally Qualified Health Centers. BHSB will provide approximately \$50,000 per clinic to cover a portion of the transition cost (e.g., technology, staff time for training, etc.) and augment revenue to reduce or eliminate the risk (real or perceived) of holding hours “open” for walk-in or virtual behavioral health services.

The consultant will assist clinics with the following issues:

- Developing the requisite clinic infrastructure and operating processes
- Estimating costs associated with offering Open Access models
- Providing training to build necessary skills and competencies
- Tracking and optimizing clinician and staff productivity
- Addressing current and future workforce capacity
- Calculating business metrics to plan, implement, and sustain the model
- Identifying the optimal number of days and hours to offer Open Access for immediate-need services

Approaching this as a pilot program, BHSB anticipates two or three rounds of offering the opportunity for clinics to access seed funding and technical assistance, with the bulk of the expansion efforts happening in 2023 and 2024. In calendar year 2025, BHSB will finalize an analysis of the pilot to assess and report impact to providers, payers, and policy makers.

The consultant will provide technical assistance to each participating provider to collect relevant data. Each provider will be expected to collect data to measure how Open Access services met individuals’ immediate behavioral health needs and how it helped providers: better utilize existing capacity, reduce average client wait time, increase average intake of clients, increase in provider practice net income, reduce average provider practice cost, and reduce average cost per client.

If the value proposition is proven, community-based behavioral health providers will have a positive experience (e.g., client experience, revenue generation), and

GBRICS will be positioned to advocate for sustainable funding and/or public- and private-sector reimbursement sources in 2025 to support the continued expansion of Open Access to immediate-need behavioral health services in the region.

BHSB proposes including four to six providers in the initial pilot round in 2022 in one GBRICS jurisdiction and incrementally add new providers throughout the region in 2023 and 2024 disbursed across jurisdictions based on identified need.

#### **D. FOCUS POPULATION**

This pilot will specifically work with outpatient behavioral health providers that operate in the public behavioral health system in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Carroll County, and Howard County.

Maryland Medicaid estimates that there are 166 Outpatient Mental Health Centers in this four-jurisdiction region. For the region overall, 30% of the population is enrolled in Medicaid (ranging from a high of 47% in Baltimore City to 17% in Carroll County). This region has a combined population of 1.94 million residents, 30% of the state's population. The region includes urban, suburban, and rural areas, and is racially and economically diverse. See Attachment A: GBRICS Region.

Traditionally, behavioral health providers have been hesitant to deviate from the standard appointment model. Yet, often behavioral health providers have non-billable time resulting from missed appointments (i.e., as many as 30% of scheduled appointments are "no shows"). Implementing an Open Access model for services, providers can build more productive and financially viable practices.

#### **E. STAFFING REQUIREMENTS**

There are no staffing requirements, but there is a preference for a Maryland-based vendor.

#### **F. FUNDING AVAILABILITY**

Up to \$379,500 is available from 2/1/22-12/31/22 to conduct the work as described in the Scope of Service section. Services should be billed at an hourly rate (direct costs are not allowed).

Work with 4-6 clinics will begin in February 2022 and continue throughout the calendar year. Work with an additional 12-14 clinics will begin around June 2022 and continue into the next contracting year if the selected organization delivers on-time, high quality work during the initial contract.

Additional funding up to \$389,000 will be available in calendar year 2023 to complete the work with the clinics from the first contract year and start work with

additional clinics. Additional funding of approximately \$199,400 will be available for additional work through calendar year 2024.

## **G. 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. Selected organizations will be required to submit a new budget on BHSB's budget form, 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 were 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 multiplied by the number 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 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.

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 support community-based outpatient behavioral health providers in the GBRICS region to implement an Open Access model to expand access to services for people in immediate need of care.

### B. APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

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

- Two years of experience supporting the implementation of Open Access models
- Two years of experience providing technical assistance around workflows and staffing ratios

### C. PROPOSAL TIMEFRAME AND SPECIFICATIONS

#### 1. Timeline

Release Date:	October 13, 2021
Pre-Proposal Conference:	November 3, 2021, 11 am
Proposal Due:	November 19, 2021, 12 pm
Anticipated Award Notification:	January 4, 2022
Anticipated Contract Start:	February 1, 2022

#### 2. Pre-Proposal Conference

**Date:** November 3, 2021

**Time:** 11:00 am

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

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

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

Phone Conference ID: 446 439 364#

*Please join five minutes early to leave time to troubleshoot. If you have any problems accessing the meeting, please contact [Procurements@BHSBaltimore.org](mailto:Procurements@BHSBaltimore.org).*

Please RSVP if you plan to attend this meeting and submit questions in advance to [Procurements@BHSBaltimore.org](mailto:Procurements@BHSBaltimore.org) no later than the close of business on **Friday, October 29, 2021**. 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 **November 9, 2021**.

The questions and answers will also be emailed to all individuals who submitted questions. If you would like to be emailed this document but do not have a question, please let the Procurement Lead know by emailing [Procurements@BHSBaltimore.org](mailto:Procurements@BHSBaltimore.org).

*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 continuing 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 **12:00 pm (noon) EST on November 19, 2021**. 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](mailto: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 Shanna Borell whose contact information is listed below.

Shanna Borell, Procurement Lead  
Email: [Procurements@BHSBaltimore.org](mailto:Procurements@BHSBaltimore.org)

**5. Anticipated Initial Service Term:** February 1, 2022 – December 31, 2022, with options to renew annually pending availability of funding and performance.

### **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 RIGHTS**

Applicants may file an appeal within five days of notification of non-selection. BHSB will review the appeal, examine any additional information provided by the protesting party, and respond to the protestor within ten working days of receipt of the appeal.

### 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/>.

*Late proposals will not be considered.*

It is the policy of BHSB to adhere to the rules and regulations in the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). We do not anticipate that any proposal submitted in response to this RFP would include individually identifiable health information. However, if it does, please remember that protected health information (PHI) needs to be secured via encryption and should adhere 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 (25 points)

- a. Provide an overview of your organization, including its history, mission, and overall purpose as well as your organization's experience implementing Open Access models and providing technical assistance around workflows and staffing ratios.
- b. Describe your organization's experience managing programs similar to this project, meeting contractual deliverables and obligations (including any contracts with BHSB), and your capacity to manage the programmatic and financial requirements of this grant.
- c. Briefly describe your organization's capacity to complete our project on time and on budget (e.g., staff, equipment, software, office location, etc.).
- d. Submit at least three professional references from clients that speaks to your relevant experience, including their contact information and role of the reference.
- e. Describe whether your organization is owned and/or led by members of historically marginalized or oppressed groups, including racial and ethnic groups (i.e., African American/Black, Latinx), LGBTQIA communities, people with disabilities including behavioral health

disorders, etc. BHSB awards additional points to help address systemic barriers that have led to inequity in access to funding.

**2. Principles and Values (5 points)**

- a. Describe your organization’s commitment to racial and social justice and health equity.

**3. Service Delivery (10 points)**

- a. Describe your organization’s plan to provide all services as outlined in the Scope of Service section of this RFP.
- b. Describe your organization’s past experience (positive and negative) and success in implementing Open Access with clinics or practices in urban, suburban, and rural areas in ways that were trauma-responsive, culturally competent, and holistic.

**4. Staffing Plan (5 points)**

- a. Describe your organization’s staffing plan, including the staff expertise and experience to support Open Access and Practice Transformation.

**5. Program Evaluation and Quality Assurance (10 points)**

- a. Describe your willingness and ability to participate in the outcomes evaluation that will be completed by an independent consultant.
- b. Describe what data you propose using to inform the planning process and how you will collect, analyze, and present the data, including Protected Health Information in compliance with HIPAA, Public Law 104-191, and Title 42, Part 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations (42 CFR Part 2) governing the confidentiality of Substance Use Disorder Patient Records.

**6. Proposed Program Budget (10 points)**

- a. Provide a line-item budget for a one-year contract that outlines consultant staff hourly rates (include rate per staff or blended hourly rate) and estimated number of hours and all other anticipated direct cost to implement Open Access model at four outpatient behavioral health clinics.
- b. Provide a budget narrative/justification that explains revenue and expense projections in more detail.

**7. Implementation Timeline (5 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.

**8. Appendices**

- Resume or curriculum vitae for individuals/consultants working on this project
- Organizational Chart
- Line-Item Budget
- At least three complete professional references from clients, including contact information and role of the reference.