



Request for Proposal: Evaluation of Racial Equity Impact of Policies to Address Housing Access among People with Substance Use Disorder in Boston

Questions and Responses

January 17, 2023

Request for Proposal: Evaluation of Racial Equity Impact of Policies to Address Housing Access among People with Substance Use Disorder in Boston

Proposal Due Date Extended: Friday, January 27, 2023, by 9:00 AM EST

Background Information Questions

Q1: Is the evaluation limited to the Mass & Cass area or does it include the entire city of Boston?

A: This evaluation is not limited to the Mass & Cass area. BPHC is seeking an evaluation of housing policies and housing access targeted towards all unsheltered and unhoused individuals experiencing substance use disorder (SUD) in the city of Boston, which includes those living in or near the Mass & Cass area. A subsection of this project will specifically focus on evaluating the city's low threshold housing program, which was implemented in January 2022 to house unsheltered individuals experiencing SUD living in or near the Mass & Cass area.

Q2: To what extent is the Continuum of Care participating in this initiative?

A: The project team will be working closely with the Mayor's Office of Housing (MoH), which coordinates the Boston Continuum of Care, as a key stakeholder in the implementation of this initiative. We anticipate that MoH will assist in liaising with other CoC stakeholders as needed.

Q3: To what extent are current SUD providers and housing providers collaborating outside of this initiative?

A: The low-threshold housing effort was specifically designed to serve individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness and substance use disorder. The effort is led by the Boston Public Health Commission, Mayor's Office of Housing, Recovery Services, Homeless Services Bureau,

along with a range of community service providers from substance use and housing sectors, and healthcare provider partners.

Q4: Was there a prior contractor working with BPHC to conduct the initial study of persons moved in January 2022? If so, please provide their name.

A: BPHC conducted an internal follow-up evaluation of persons who moved from the Mass. & Cass tent encampment in January 2022. These findings are currently being finalized internally and will be available to share with the evaluator.

Q5: "Entities involved in the implementation of this initiative are not eligible to apply." Could BPHC provide more detail on what level of involvement in implementation would be a conflict?

A: Entities that are ineligible to apply include agencies that operate the six low threshold sites as well as any organization engaged in substantial service provision at the sites.

Q6: Is there any additional information available about the housing service providers? We are interested in learning whether there are different levels or types of services available across the six sites? Were all six programs implemented at the same time?

A: A summary of services provided across the six sites can be found [at this link](#). Updated information about the services provided at the sites will be available to the evaluator.

Q7: What (if any) involvement will local law enforcement have with the evaluation? Are they a collaborator or stakeholder for the project?

A: Boston Police Department and Street Outreach Unit is a key member of the Mass. & Cass Coordinated Response Team, and a key stakeholder in the project along with other law enforcement stakeholders.

Q8: Re: aim #1, "Determine the impact of structural racism on the existing policies and practices for people experiencing homelessness and SUD in Boston": Do the policies and practices being evaluated include the Low-Threshold Initiative implemented as of January 2022 or all other policies besides this novel intervention?

A: A key focus of the evaluation is on the low-threshold housing programs implemented in January 2022. The policies and practices referred to include those that are being used to provide resources and services that are critical to the service delivery model(s) currently being implemented to address the housing crisis of people with substance use disorder in Boston. Of specific focus is the role of policies and practices in addressing structural racism.

Evaluation Methods Questions

Q9: For IRB submission, does the City have a specific IRB that contractors should use, or are contractors able to choose an IRB with whom they have a current working relationship?

A: BPHC has an IRB that it uses, and can discuss use of alternative or applicant's IRB process upon award.

Q10: In the project fact sheet, under key outcomes, it references a multisector working group. Is this group already established and meeting regularly? If so, who participates?

A: BPHC plans to convene a multisector working group composed of stakeholders addressing this issue, including representatives from housing, criminal justice, behavioral health, community development, and community members with lived experience.

Q11: Will BPHC make survey and follow-up survey data available to the contractor?

A: BPHC will share findings from relevant surveys and evaluations conducted related to this project with the evaluator.

Q12: Are there any plans for BPHC/a contractor to repeat the previous survey? If so, would these data be made available to the evaluator?

A: BPHC does not have plans to repeat the 3-6 month follow-up survey of individuals from the January 2022 tent encampment. Applicants should discuss inclusion of follow-up surveys or evaluations in their evaluation plans.

Q13: Will the underlying administrative dashboard data (including client demographics) be available to the evaluation contractor with a DUA/IRB approval?

A: BPHC will work with the evaluator to ensure that they have reasonable access to relevant and available administration data in accordance with legal and ethical guidelines (or according to HIPPA and other data protection requirements.

Q14: Is the evaluator expected to survey or otherwise contact people who, at the time, are unsheltered, homeless and have SUD?

A: The successful applicant is expected to identify processes for how they will access and analyze data about people who are unsheltered homeless and have substance use disorder.

Q15: What kinds of housing policies should be evaluated? Do these include policies of Boston's low threshold housing programs and the policies of existing long-term housing programs? Or is the focus on all sources of affordable housing available in Boston and other communities?

A key focus of the evaluation is on the low-threshold housing programs implemented in January 2022. The policies and practices referred to include those that are being used to provide resources and services that are critical to the service delivery model(s) currently being implemented to address the housing crisis of people with substance use disorder in Boston. Of specific focus is the role of policies and practices in addressing structural racism.

Q16: Does BPHC have any preferred qualitative data collection methods in mind for this evaluation?

A: The BPHC does not prescribe any specific qualitative data methods. We do, however expect that any inquiry methods reflect BPHCs Equitable Evaluation Principles – please refer to documents attached.

Q17: In reference to “Methodology should incorporate a comparison group or comparison to past data outcomes obtained through secondary data.”, can BPHC clarify if they would prefer the evaluation to compare groups of individuals and/or examine past outcomes of programs similar to the city's 6 low threshold congregate and transitional housing sites? Would BPHC prefer a comparison of groups with different demographic traits or a comparison of groups who either did or did not participate in the low threshold housing program?

A: Applicants should propose a methodology that addresses the evaluation aims.

Q18: Re: aim #2, are evaluators examining racial equity impact only for the current Low Threshold Initiative or all current transitional and permanent supportive housing programs in Boston?

A: A key focus of the evaluation is on the low-threshold housing programs implemented in January 2022. The policies and practices referred to include those that are being used to provide resources and services that are critical to the service delivery model(s) currently being implemented to address the housing crisis of people with substance use disorder in Boston. Of specific focus is the role of policies and practices in addressing structural racism.

Q19: While the strategic outlook focuses on age, gender identity, race/ethnicity, and primary language spoken at home as contextual data, has BPHC recently identified any additional, intersecting identities of service recipients that should be considered in the evaluation approach (e.g., sexuality)?

A: Contextual data regarding other intersecting determinants of health for this population have not been routinely collected by BPHC. However, BPHC welcomes additional perspectives and determinants that are identified by the evaluator before or during the implementation of this project to address the aims of this evaluation.

Q20: Re: aim #3, “Identify changes to housing policies and determine the impact of policy changes on structural racism following implementation throughout project”: Is the evaluator identifying/recommending policy changes based on the initial/on-going findings from this evaluation project?

A: The evaluator will provide findings throughout the project that can contribute to informing potential future policy, program, and practice changes to address structural racism, and support enhanced outcomes for people experiencing homelessness and substance use disorder. This

process may be integrated throughout the evaluation and changes in practice and policies may be included in further assessment.

Data Questions

Q21: Are any administrative data available prior to January 2022 for these clients? What type of variables are available?

A: Administrative data specific to the individuals housed in the low threshold sites was not collected before January 2022. Variables collected from individuals housed in the low-threshold sites include demographics, attendance, services provided, bed occupancy rates, and move-out and housing outcomes. Other relevant data collected by BPHC will also be made available to the evaluator. In addition, access to other related data sources will be explored based on review of the evaluation plan. All data will be de-identified and distributed in a way that is consistent with applicable law and BPHC policies related to privacy.

Q22: During the evaluation period, will the evaluation team have access to individual-level program and/or administrative data?

A: BPHC will make individual level program and/or administrative data available as necessary for the completion of the analysis in a way that is consistent with applicable law and BPHC policies related to privacy. All data will be de-identified and distributed in a way that is consistent with applicable law and BPHC policies related to privacy.

Q23: Please describe the level of involvement that BPHC staff will have in data collection (e.g., will they assist in data collection?)

A: Applicants should present an evaluation plan that does not rely on BPHC staff collecting data.

Q24: Do the data referenced in the Relevant Data Collection Initiatives section (i.e., Mass & Cass tent encampment survey and follow ups, program data for 6 low-threshold sites) contain identifiable information that would allow for attempts to follow up with previous respondents/clients?

A: The evaluator will not have access to identifiable information and any follow-up evaluations will be conducted in a way that is consistent with applicable law and BPHC policies related to privacy.

Q25: Will the evaluator have access to line-level/client-level and/or aggregate secondary data from relevant City of Boston departments/agencies that can be used to build a comparison cohort (e.g., Office of Recovery Services, Recovery Services Bureau, Homeless Services Bureau, Boston CoC, etc.) and/or for other aspects of the policy analysis? Would this include data collected prior to and/or during the Low-Threshold Initiative?

A: BPHC will make individual level program and/or administrative data available as necessary for the completion of the analysis in a way that is consistent with applicable law and BPHC policies related to privacy. All data will be de-identified and distributed in a way that is consistent with applicable law and BPHC policies related to privacy. **Q26: Outside of BPHC's December 2021 survey, are there other data collection activities service recipients have been or will be asked to engage in (outside of the evaluation)? Dates and information on whether the evaluation team may be able to collaborate on these opportunities would be appreciated.**

A: There are no additional data collection activities planned at this time.

Q27: To what extent are the six programs' funding parameters connected to their data collected (and uploaded on the Mass. & Cass data dashboard)?

A: The six low-threshold sites collect attendance, demographic, and service delivery data on participants as part of their program involvement (some of the data collected are uploaded to the public dashboard).

Q28: Also, the proposal discusses including a comparison group in the secondary data. Can you speak to any specific datasets that we could get access to, if funded, through your organization?

A: The evaluator should propose strategies and data sets to address proposed methodology.

Q29: Will data from HMIS (or other homeless information system) and SUD providers be available as part of this evaluation?

A: Access to data elements, collection tools and reports may be available based on the proposed evaluation plan's proposed measures.

Budget, Finance, and Contracting Questions

Q30: Are there any caps on overhead rates for organizations?

A: Yes. Unless the organization has a Federally Negotiated Rate Agreement then the overhead, or Indirect Costs (IDC), are capped at 10%.

Q31: Is the budget or the budget narrative included in the 10 page limit, or should they be included separately as attachments?

A: No, the budget and budget narrative are not included in the 10 page limit and should be included as a separate attachment.

Q32: Can you provide the standard contractual terms and conditions for review prior to the submission of the proposal?

A: Please find the subaward agreement template in the RFP attachments.

Q33: What will the resultant agreement type be? Will it be a grant, cooperative agreement, or a professional services agreement?

A: This RFP will result in a subaward agreement.

Q34: Would BPHC consider an extension to the proposal submission timeline given the federal holidays during the proposal period?

A: Yes, the new proposal submission deadline is Thursday, January 26, 2023, by 11:59 PM EST

Q35: What are the due dates for the quarterly and annual reports to OMH?

A: The OMH quarterly reporting schedule is as follows, with the quarter 4 timeline also being the annual report deadline:

Quarter	Reporting Period	Due Date
Q1	September 30, 2022 – December 31, 2022	January 30, 2023 – does not apply to applicant
Q2	January 1, 2023 – March 31, 2023	April 30, 2023
Q3	April 1, 2023 – June 30, 2023	July 15, 2023
Q4	July 1, 2023 – September 30, 2023	October 30, 2023

Q36: Will BPHC accept a firm fixed price budget with project milestones? Is there are preferred budget template?

A: For the proposal response a line item budget and budget justification are needed.

Q37: Other than progress specific to this evaluation, what are the obligations of the contractor for OMH grant reporting?

A: At this moment, OMH is requesting the following be included with quarterly progress reports:

A description of the evaluation plan including:

- Describe the instrumentation/tools and frequency of data collection.
- Explain how the evaluation has demonstrated the extent to which the project trains community stakeholders to access, translate, synthesize and utilize data.
- Any significant changes to the evaluation plan
- Promising practices identified
- Updated Logic Model

Q38: Page 9. "Proposal Page Limit: Proposal narrative not to exceed 10 pages, single-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman, one inch margins. This page limit does not include cover page and requested attachments (i.e., workplan table, organization and resumes of key staff)." Can BPHC please confirm what is meant by "organization" in the attachments list?

A: Please disregard the addition of the word "organization" that was a typo.

Q39: Are evaluator partnerships comprised of staff from 2 or more organizations eligible to apply?

A: *Proposals should be submitted by one organization. Consultants or subawards may be included in proposals. Inclusion of key personnel and clear description of staff, consultant, or subcontractor roles must be included.*

Q40: Does BPHC have an anticipated length for both the quarterly and annual evaluation reports?

A: *We do not have an answer to this question at this time but will receive more information from OMH as the selected evaluator is onboarded.*

Q41: Can you provide more information about any budgetary restrictions? For instance, is there a cap of administrative or indirect costs? Any unallowable expenses?

A: *Unless the organization has a Federally Negotiated Rate Agreement then the overhead, or Indirect Costs (IDC), are capped at 10%.*

Please refer to the resources below for more information:

- *Section 200.420 of the Uniform Guidance speaks to what types of costs are allowable and unallowable (<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200/subpart-E>).*
- *This is an Office of Justice quick facts sheet that give a brief overview of what types of costs are unallowable (https://www.ojp.gov/tfsc/ojp_tfsc_guide_sheet_allowable_vs_unallowable_costs_12421_508_1). Any specific language in the Grant Agreement with our funder supersede these regulations.*