

Office of Quality, Planning, and Research

REQUEST FOR AGREEMENT (RFA) MHA-16-17-RE-020-EMPLOYERS

Evaluator to Conduct Research on Employer Perspectives on Hiring Persons with Behavioral Health Conditions

Request for Proposal Issued: March 23, 2016

Proposal Due Date: April 25, 2016

1. Funding Opportunity

The purpose of this RFA is to obtain the professional services of a research entity (hereafter “Applicant”), to develop and conduct research on employer perspectives on hiring persons with behavioral health conditions.

Obtaining and maintaining competitive employment is a fundamental part of modern life. Research has shown that employed individuals have better overall mental and physical health, economic stability, positive self-worth, and connections to community when compared to those without work. People with behavioral health disorders share the same benefits from being employed as those without a disorder, yet are far less likely to seek, secure, and maintain paid employment. Unemployment rates for persons with behavioral health disorders are more than three times that of the general population. Less than half of the individuals served by the public behavioral health system are in the labor force. This is unfortunate because employment gives a person a sense of purpose and hope, and is a vital component to the recovery process.

To support the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) program, policy, and planning efforts surrounding employment of persons with behavioral health disorders in the community, the department is in need of information and research on *employer perspectives on hiring persons with behavioral health conditions in Ohio*. The department is particularly interested in comparing employers that have programs in place that work to hire persons with behavioral health disorders versus those that do not. Other variables of interest include size of employer, industry type, experience with hiring persons with behavioral health issues (exposure), and locally owned versus a National Corporation. Projects are to be directed toward persons with mental illness and substance use disorders. Acceptable research methodologies include quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. Only one project will be selected for funding. Funds for this awarded project may not exceed \$60,000 for a 12-month period.

2. Applicant Qualifications

Domestic, public or private, non-profit or for profit organizations meeting the following eligibility requirements are invited to submit a proposal:

- Experience in the area of behavioral health services research and evaluation
- Experience researching/evaluating recovery supports for persons with behavioral health issues, with a preference on employment services
- Track record of scientific publications in the area of behavioral health services research.

3. Scope of Work

Applicant will propose an approach for developing and implementing a research plan, including background, study design, data collection, data analysis, and time line to meet the objectives described in this RFA.

Applicant must comply with the requirements of and work with OhioMHAS research and program staff for the duration of the project. The selected researcher must provide quarterly fiscal and research progress reports and a final report due at the end of the proposed project.

3. A. Project Tasks and Deliverables

The selected researcher will develop and conduct the research which will include the following deliverables:

1. Written research plan addressing the items under “3.B. Detailed Requirements” section due by April 25, 2016.
2. Submission of quarterly research progress reports (Form 618) and quarterly fiscal reports (Form 619).
3. Final written research report and interpretation of results at conclusion of project.
4. Presentation of findings to key stakeholders about findings and policy implications

3.B. Detailed Requirements

The primary goal of the research is to assess employer perspectives on hiring persons with behavioral health disorders.

The research should assess:

- a. Employment site characteristics
- b. Whether the employment site has a program geared toward hiring persons with behavioral health disorders
- c. The characteristics of the employment hiring program
- d. Comparison of employment sites with specialized hiring programs vs. those that do not have such programs
- e. Perceptions of facilitators and barriers to hiring persons with behavioral health disorders in both groups
- f. Exposure to hiring and working with persons with behavioral health disorders
- g. Work performance and personality factors of employer/employee
- h. Industry type (business type)

- i. Employer perceptions of hiring concerns

3.C. Required Interim and Final Evaluation Report Content

The following elements are required for the quarterly and final reports to be submitted pursuant to section 3.A.:

For Quarterly Progress Report:

1. Updates or changes to research plan (if any).
2. Progress on the research (e.g. describe data collection efforts underway) and any issues encountered while conducting the research.
3. Results and interpretation of those results.
4. Implications of the research findings for further policy and program considerations.

For Final Report:

1. Results and interpretation of those results.
2. Implications of the research findings for further program and policy implementation and adaptation.

4. Questions, Technical Assistance, and Updates

All questions relating to this RFA must be submitted electronically to EmployerPerspectives@mha.ohio.gov later than April 22, 2016 at 12:00 p.m. **No questions will be answered after the deadline.** You may NOT contact any OhioMHAS staff member directly with questions regarding this RFA. Contacting staff directly with questions could result in disqualification of a proposal.

Interested parties are required to monitor this website for any updates to the RFA.

5. Proposal Contents

5.A. Proposal Format

The combined page limit for the proposal narrative and applicant qualifications and experience sections is 10 single spaced pages in 12 point Times New Roman font. This page limit does not include the cover letter, abstract, the budget table and budget narrative, or appendices. Information exceeding the page limit will not be reviewed.

The proposal shall contain the following sections in the following order:

- Cover Letter [5.B.]
- Abstract [5.C.]
- Background and Experience [5.D.]
- Project Staffing and Organization [5.E.]

Technical Proposal [5.F.]
Budget Proposal [5.G.]
Other Required Documentation [5.H.]

5.B. Cover Letter

Include a cover letter with the following information (maximum of one page; does not count toward page limit):

- Applicant's name, mailing address, telephone number and website
- Name, telephone number, and email address of a contact person
- Title of this solicitation
- Submission date of the Proposal
- Applicant's total Proposal amount
- Signature of an individual authorized to enter into contracts for the Applicant

5.C. Abstract

The Abstract will consist of a summary of the highlights contained in the proposal and will be a maximum of one page, which does not count toward page limit.

5.D. Behavioral Health Services Research Background and Experience

This section will include information on the applicant's organization and should give details of experience with similar projects, placing a particular emphasis on researching and evaluating programs designed to enhance a person's recovery. Applicants will detail their experience in: 1) researching behavioral health services and recovery supports, 2) demonstrating a track record of scientific publications in the area of behavioral health services with particular emphasis on recovery supports. ***It is highly recommended to provide samples of peer reviewed publications related to previous research projects in behavioral health services.***

5.E. Project Staffing and Organization

This section must include the proposed staffing, deployment, and organization of personnel to be assigned to this project. At any point after grant award, staffing changes may be made only through the mutual consent of the selected Applicant and the department project manager.

The Applicant shall provide information as to the qualifications and experience of all key personnel to be assigned to this project, including CVs citing experience with similar projects with a particular emphasis on recovery supports.

5.F. Technical Proposal

The Technical Proposal should address the applicant's project plan and work methods that will be utilized to implement the scope of work outlined in Section 3.

The following elements must be addressed in the technical proposal:

1. Goals and objectives of Research
2. Research Design and Methods
3. Research methods including:
 - Study Design: Describe the study design, including both qualitative and quantitative components when appropriate. The use of comparison group design is required for this RFA.
 - Study population: Describe the participants to be included in the research. Specify inclusion and exclusion criteria for participation in the research, and the recruitment strategy. Include in this section any proposed incentives.
 - Data sources and data collection methods: Describe the data collection approach to answer key research questions, which may include implementing surveys, analysis of existing datasets, interviews, site observation, etc... Include copies of all instruments to be used in the research, along with reliability and validity information.
 - Data analysis: Describe the analytic methods that will be used.
 - Protection of Human Subjects: What provisions will be taken to assure confidentiality? What provisions will be taken to assure privacy and protection of data, e.g., secure electronic data exchanges, storage and destruction of data? In cases where identifiable individual data will be collected, individual consent is required or a waiver of participant authorization from an IRB. The consent form must also indicate the general use of the data, the possible risks and benefits, and must tell the participant that participation is not required. Copies of consent forms to be used must be included in the proposal. Issues regarding the rights of human subjects in research must be addressed in the proposal documentation itself, and will be used in deciding whether the proposed research would put subjects at substantial risk. All proposals submitted to OhioMHAS for funding must have the approval of the IRB at the principal investigator's university or organization prior to execution.
 - Applicability: Please describe how the project's findings will enhance the state of knowledge in the area of study. How does the project specifically address the RFA announcement and the OhioMHAS mission, vision, and strategic goals? How will the knowledge gained be applicable to improved services to clients under the care of the public behavioral health system in Ohio? How might the project's findings be used and disseminated within the public behavioral health system?
 - Time Frame: What is the time frame for the project? Explain the phasing of significant segments of the study.

5.G. Budget Proposal

Proposals must provide a budget for all proposed costs to complete the tasks described in the project proposal and include a budget narrative that specifies each resource that will be assigned to a task, including the resource's hourly rate, the estimated number of hours that the resource is expected to expend on the task, and the extended rate for that resource on that task. The proposed budget must include all of the applicant's expenses, including all travel expenses and incentive payments for participants if any. All travel must be at state of Ohio rate. Proposed budget shall indicate amounts per State fiscal year (FY 2016=7/1/15-6/30/16; FY 2017=7/1/16-6/30/17).

6. Proposal Submission

6.A. Proposal Due Date: 5:00 p.m., April 25, 2016

Proposals must be received by this time to be considered. Risk of delay or failure of delivery rests with the applicant.

6.B. Where to Submit: One electronic copy must be submitted to EmployerPerspectives@mha.ohio.gov

7. Proposal Evaluation and Selection Process

All proposals will be reviewed for responsiveness to the requirements of the RFA. Incomplete proposals will not be considered.

- Content, depth of experience and grasp of research experience in behavioral health (Weight: 30 points)
- Proposed research plan, capacity to provide research services, and overall value to the OhioMHAS recovery supports program and the citizens of the State of Ohio. (Weight: 60 points)
- Competency and qualification of staff (10 points)

Proposal evaluation possible points: 100

Each applicant shall demonstrate in its proposal that the applicant, its management and employees are experienced and competent and that it has the background and training to perform the services required by this RFA. Award of a grant to one applicant does not mean that the other proposals lacked merit, but that, all factors considered, the selected proposal was deemed most advantageous to the OhioMHAS recovery supports program. No sub-contracting is allowed for this opportunity.

Anticipated Date of Award Announcement: It is anticipated that the grant award will be made by May 9, 2016

8. Conditions of Award

- A. OhioMHAS reserves the right to make no award, make an award for a lesser amount, make an alternative award for the specified project or make an award for a shorter duration. OhioMHAS reserves the right to ask clarifying questions, issue conditional awards, and negotiate a best and final proposal with one or more applicants(s). OhioMHAS reserves the right to waive errors and omissions that do not materially affect the proposal. Errors and omissions may result in lower evaluation scores or rejection of the proposal.
- B. OhioMHAS will not be liable for any costs incurred by applicant in responding to this RFA, regardless of whether the department awards through this process, cancels the RFA, or makes the award through a different process.
- C. Selected researcher will be solely responsible for reporting, withholding, and paying all employment related taxes, payments, and withholdings for his/her self and any personnel, including but not limited to: Federal, State, and local income taxes, social security, unemployment or disability deductions, withholdings, and payments.
- D. Any modifications to tasks within this grant will be defined, documented and mutually agreed upon by the Applicant and the OhioMHAS research program manager prior to starting work on the modified task. Amendments to the research for tasks are limited to an extension of time for project completion.
- E. The OhioMHAS research project manager reserves the right to renegotiate the services deemed necessary to meet the needs of this project according to OhioMHAS priorities. OhioMHAS and the Applicant must mutually agree to all changes. Renegotiated services outside the scope of the original proposal will require a new grant agreement.
- F. OhioMHAS and the Applicant are mutually obligated to keep open and regular channels of communication in order to ensure the successful execution of the grant agreement. Both parties are responsible for communicating any potential problem or issue to the Deputy Director of the OhioMHAS Office of Quality, Planning, and Research within three business days of becoming aware of the problem.
- G. Implementation Deadline: Once awarded, applicants will have approximately 30 days to commence evaluation activities.