#### REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

**Program Evaluation –**

**Diversionary Employment**

**Issued: July 15, 2024**

**Due: September 6, 2024**

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**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

**Program Evaluation – Diversionary Employment**

PURPOSE OF FUNDS

The Baltimore City Mayor’s Office of Employment Development (MOED), on behalf of the Mayor and City Council, requests proposals for a research partner to evaluate the agency’s Diversionary Employment program and the efficacy of the supported employment intervention model in serving justice-involved clients with substance use disorder (SUD). The hope is that this research will meaningfully contribute to the body of knowledge around equity in workforce development. The contracted organization will offer expertise in several different data collection methodologies and research methods, and demonstrate prior experience evaluating substance use interventions, justice involvement, and supported employment programs. The research partner will conduct comprehensive research on the program’s methods and outcomes and produce a final written report.

BACKGROUND

The Mayor’s Office of Employment Development (MOED) is Baltimore’s workforce development agency and American Job Center operator. MOED serves as the City’s primary agent of workforce development services for employers, career seekers, people with disabilities, career changers, returning citizens, laid-off workers, and youth. MOED’s mission is to deliver economic justice to Baltimore residents. To MOED, economic justice means creating an equitable workforce system that responds to all residents’ needs and provides viable economic opportunities to all residents, especially those who have been generally and systemically disadvantaged. We believe that every resident deserves the right for meaningful work and a hopeful future.

MOED operates a number of programs and initiatives designed to support Baltimore’s justice-involved population, particularly those struggling with SUD. These include the Re-entry Center, housed inside the Northwest American Job Center, which provides intake and navigation services, hosts career fairs, and offers workshops on topics such as record expungement. The center also administers Bridge to Careers, a program that provides re-entering citizens academic enhancement and employment readiness, referrals to occupational skills training with partner organizations, and employment placement services. MOED also administers the District Court Re-entry Program, receiving referrals from the district court, and works with pre-court individuals and returning citizens referred by the Office of the Public Defender. Additionally, MOED operated a program, funded by the Support to Communities: Fostering Opioid Recovery through Workforce Development grant, focused on providing occupational training and employment placement services to residents impacted by substance use disorder.

The newly established Diversionary Employment program, supported by the U.S. Department of Justice’s Bureau of Justice Assistance’s Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Use Program (COSSUP), embeds peer recovery services within MOED’s existing career navigation system and establishes an in-house supported employment program for jobseekers in recovery. The supported employment model focuses on integrated service delivery, targeted job development, rapid job search, and long-term individualized retention support. More information about the model can be found here: <https://ipsworks.org/>. The IPS model has a strong evidence-based record of success for people with serious mental illness and has emerging research regarding efficacy with other populations with barriers to employment, such as people in recovery and people with justice involvement. Participants enrolled in the Diversionary Employment program receive the full menu of intensive services included under the supported employment model and develop their own employment plans in consultation with their assigned specialist. MOED expects the program will enroll 120 participants and that 66 of them will be connected to employment that meets their recovery goals and continue to work within the program after placement to support job retention.

PRINCIPAL RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The comprehensive evaluation will inform MOED of the ways in which aspects of implementation affected variation in outcomes, and whether the services provided were optimal for supporting participants and facilitating successful employment placement and retention.

Research questions may include:

Program design: How well was the Diversionary Employment program design understood by various stakeholders in its implementation? To what extent did the program adhere to the IPS model and in what ways did implementation deviate from the design?

Program participation: Did recruitment efforts reach the intended population? Were there evident impediments to application, enrollment, participation, or completion? Were wraparound services adequate to support and facilitate participation?

Participant outcomes: How did participation in the Diversionary Employment program affect outcomes relating to employment placement and retention, recovery goal attainment, and recidivism?

Outcomes analysis: How do Diversionary Employment participant outcomes compare to those demonstrated by similar supported employment programs? To other programs designed to support justice-involved participants in recovery? Does the model show promise of improving outcomes for the target population at scale?

Resource allocation: Were resources allocated such that they optimized outcomes for stakeholders and participants?

Stakeholder feedback: What can be learned from the experiences of participants, employers, clinicians, and community partners?

Institutional alignment: Is there evidence of new connections, increased communication, and shared resources between participants, employers, and other stakeholders that indicate progress toward an established pathway from justice involvement and recovery into stable employment? Is this pathway sustainable?

Sustainability: Based on the process analysis, what additional resources, services, or policies would be necessary to scale the CPDM to serve the universe of justice-involved Baltimoreans in recovery and to make the model a permanent program?

SCOPE OF WORK

The proposal shall include a stated commitment to complete the following tasks and deliver the following services/products:

* Interviews, Focus Groups, Document Review, and Surveys: The evaluator is expected to collect information and data on the implementation of the Diversionary Employment program through diverse methods and numerous interactions with representatives of all stakeholders and actors. This will require supplementing MOED’s available programmatic data collected with information collected directly by the evaluator.
* Quarterly updates: Updates will apprise MOED of issues with implementation, methods of investigation, and recommendations for needed adjustments as necessary.
* Year 1 Interim Report: Brief written report (10-15 pages) and presentation of findings at the end of year 1. Draft report required 60 days prior to due date.
* Year 2 Interim Report:Brief written report (10-15 pages) and presentation of findings at the end of year 2. Draft report required 60 days prior to due date.
* Final Process Evaluation Report and Presentation: Full written report and presentation of findings. Draft report required 60 days prior to due date.
* Research Materials: Submit research materials such as data collected, interview notes, and other materials created by the evaluation process and used for analysis.

QUALIFIED APPLICANTS

The selected vendor must be able to demonstrate the capacity to meet all requirements outlined in the scope of work. The research team should be comprised of experts in justice involvement, substance use disorder, and/or supported employment interventions. At least one member of the research team must be based in the Baltimore area and available to conduct in-person interviews, site visits, and data collection as required.

CONTRACT PERIOD AND AMOUNT

The selected vendor(s) will have up to 33 months commencing no later than January 6, 2025 and expiring no later than September 30, 2027 to collect data, interview staff and participants, conduct all necessary analysis, and produce a complete final evaluation of the Diversionary Employment program. The contract amount may not exceed $236,862.

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Proposals must include:

1. Abstract
2. Cover page
3. Proposal narrative
4. Sub-contractor agreements
5. Writing sample
6. Letters of reference
7. Program budget

The required proposal document must be prepared using 12-point font, double spaced, and on numbered pages. The proposal narrative must be limited to 10 pages.

Submit your application via email to moedrfp@baltimorecity.gov by 4:30 PM on September 6, 2024.

COST OF PREPARING PROPOSALS

Costs for developing, preparing and submitting proposals are solely the responsibility of the bidders. MOED will not provide reimbursement for such costs.

CLARIFICATION PROCEDURES

All clarifications or changes to submitted proposals must be in the form of a written addendum and received prior to **September 10, 2024.**

WITHDRAWALS

A submitted proposal may be withdrawn prior to the due date. A written request to withdraw the proposal must be submitted electronically to moedrfp@baltimorecity.gov.

PUBLIC RECORDS

Applicants are advised that documents in possession of the Mayor’s Office of Employment Development are considered public records and subject to disclosure under the Maryland Public Information Act.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

RFP issued: July 15, 2024

Written questions due on or before: August 12, 2024

Response to questions posted: August 16, 2024

Proposals due: September 6, 2024

Award is announced on or about: September 30, 2024

Final qualification documents due from selectees: October 11, 2024

Contract completed and approved on or about: November 30, 2024

Start of project no later than: January 6, 2025

Contract end date: September 30, 2027

QUALIFICATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

All organizations must meet a minimum level of administrative and fiscal capacity in order to contract with MOED. Therefore, all applicants given selection notification must provide the following Documentation of Qualifications by October 11, 2024. Failure to satisfactorily provide the following documentation could result in disqualification of proposed award.

**Documentation of Organizations’ Qualifications**

* In good standing with the Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation at time of proposal submission
* Legal entity (Proof of Incorporation, 501c (3), etc.) *<Must submit document proving legal entity.>*
* Written personnel policies *<Must submit table of contents of personnel policies.>*
* Written conflict of interest policy for staff and board *<Must submit copy of Conflict of Interest Policy.>*
* Written grievance procedure for customers/clients <*Must submit copy of grievance procedure*.>
* Ongoing quality assurance process for services <*Must submit descriptions of process*.>
* For organizations with an annual budget of at least $100,000 *<Must submit current annual budget document identifying the various sources and amounts.>*
* For organizations that have more than one revenue source *<Must submit revenue documentation identifying the various sources and amounts*.>
* Proven fiscal capacity including capacity for fund accounting. *<If the organization was audited within the past three years, the organization must submit a copy of the most recent formal audit completed within the last year. Must satisfactorily address all findings. If audited statement is unavailable, submit copies of unaudited financial statements for the three (3) most recently completed years.>*
* Verify that the organization has procured and will maintain during the life of the contract the following required insurance coverage: professional liability, errors and omissions; commercial general liability insurance, including contractual liability insurance; business automobile liability (if applicable); worker’s compensation coverage; and employee dishonesty insurance *<Must submit copies of certificates of insurance with contract. >*
* A  networked computer connected to the Internet with a browser that is compatible with any current cloud applications or databases required by MOED; the system should have a PDF reader, office applications compatible with the current version of Microsoft Excel and Word, and email accounts for all  individuals accountable for this contract or willingness and budget to acquire these technologies *<Must submit letter describing how organization currently addresses or plans to address these criteria.*>

**Documentation of Qualifications Submission**

* Do not include any information that is not specifically requested.
* Include a cover letter properly identifying the organization and signed by an individual authorized to represent the organization, to act on behalf of it, and to legally bind it in all matters related to a contract.

SUBCONTRACTOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Program success is contingent upon the ability of the subcontractor to meet the demands of managing and administering the initiative/service. The contract awarded will be based on cost reimbursement with allowable costs limited to those reasonable and necessary for the effective and efficient performance of the contract services. With the advance written approval of MOED, the subcontractor may be permitted to subcontract specific activities, with conditions.

**NOTE:** **It is suggested that the organization has a minimum of three months operating capital on hand throughout the term of the contract.**

Subcontractor responsibilities include but are not limited to: oversight of other subcontractors; program operations and fiscal management; timely billings and reports; timely reporting of required data/information; cooperation and coordination with MOED staff; leveraged resources; and achieving outcomes stated in contract.

TECHNICAL PROPOSAL FORMAT

**COVER PAGE**

A one-page cover page should include the name of the organization, address, telephone number, email address, and the name and title of the person authorized to answer any questions about the proposal, negotiate the contract terms and contractually bind the proposer. The cover page should be signed by the signatory authority for the organization.

**ABSTRACT**

The one-page abstract should describe the proposed project, experience with providing similar services, and an overview of the planned strategy to be used for this project.

**NARRATIVE**

(Maximum 10 pages)

The Proposal Narrative should contain the following:

* *Description of Evaluation Strategy and Activities.* Describe proposed methods of evaluation, such as interviews, focus groups, document review, and literature comparison, and how key metrics from the program (enrollment, placement, completion, etc.) will be incorporated into the research design. Clearly describe strategies for obtaining required data and engaging directly with participants, including a description of MOED’s proposed role in those strategies, if any. Include a strategy for assessing system-level change and institutional alignment to create stable pathways to employment and recovery for justice-involved individuals.
* *Experience and Qualification.* A summary of the proposer’s qualifications with regard to the selection criteria identified in this RFP. The summary should contain: (a) information on projects of similar nature that the applicant has completed, including brief descriptions, dates, and names of contact persons, (b) specific mention of local or regional experience (c) specific mention of research methodology ensuring a comprehensive analysis is completed. Identify any personnel likely to work on this project and their areas of expertise.
* *Project Management and Key Technical Staff.* Designation of a project manager and the responsibilities of the manager and key personnel. Please include resumes for the project manager and key personnel. Note that the resulting contract will require commitment of the specified personnel. An outline showing estimated hours by each staff member by task shall be provided. We recommend that staff assigned to collect data directly from participants reflect Baltimore City residents most impacted by the city’s opioid epidemic. It is strongly recommended that staff tasked with data collection have lived experience of substance use disorder, justice involvement, and/or are city residents with knowledge of the community. If this is the case, voluntary disclosure of these identifications is encouraged. Applications with these credentials will be prioritized.
* *Project Timeline.* Timeline for the project activities with clearly identified deliverables at each stage*.*
* *Other Information.* Any other relevant material that the proposer wishes to provide.

**SUBCONTRACTOR AGREEMENTS**

* Drafts of agreements with all planned subcontractors (if applicable)

**WRITING SAMPLE**

* Two sample reports or writing samples demonstrating implementation analysis and evaluation approach

**LETTERS OF REFERENCE**

* Three letters of professional reference which include contact information (phone number, email address, etc.). Strong preference for references demonstrating experience working within the substance use treatment or re-entry services community.

**BUDGET GUIDELINES**

The funding for the agreement will not exceed $236,862 for the term of the agreement. This amount is provided as a planning figure only and does not commit the MOED to award a contract for this amount.

The selected research partner will not be required to leverage additional resources in order to meet described outcomes; however, they are strongly encouraged to do so. List other resources (Budget Forms, Section V) that contribute to the delivery of the proposed program. Include expense category

(ex., training wages, staff, operating, etc.), brief description, actual or estimated amount, and sources that contribute to the delivery of the proposed program. Include letters of support for all leveraged resources.

**BUDGET FORMAT**

A budget template is included as an attachment to this RFP. Please attach the completed Excel spreadsheet with your submission.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

All proposals will be evaluated on the basis of technical merit and proposed cost. This is not a low-bid procurement. Technical merit includes delivery of requested services and approach, as well as staff experience and qualifications. Teaming is permissible but the contract will be with a single prime contractor.

MOED reserves the right to negotiate respondents selected on the basis of the technical merit of their proposal and proposed cost. Respondents may be asked to provide additional information on proposals.

**Cover Page and Abstract (5 points)**

* Are the required cover page and program abstract included? Do they include all information and signatures requested?

**Experience and Qualifications (25 points)**

* Does the application include information on projects of similar nature that the applicant has completed, including brief descriptions, dates, and names of contact persons, (b) specific mention of local or regional experience (c) specific mention of research methodology ensuring a comprehensive analysis is completed.
* Does the narrative identify any personnel likely to work on this project and their areas of expertise? Do these personnel demonstrate expertise in researching, evaluating, or analyzing the justice system, substance use disorder, and/or supported employment programs?
* Do the staff identified, especially those who will engage in collecting information directly from participants, disclose lived experience of substance use disorder or justice involvement, and/or identify themselves as city residents with knowledge of the community? Note: Such disclosures are not required, but applications that include them will be prioritized.
* Are the required writing samples included? To what extent do they demonstrate familiarity with relevant subject matter, ability to design and implement a comprehensive research analysis, and an evaluation approach suitable for the targeted population and program design?
* Does the application include three letters of professional reference which include contact information (phone number, email address, etc.)? Do the references demonstrate experience working within the substance use treatment or re-entry services community?

**Program Components (50 points)**

* To what extent does the proposal describe proposed methods of evaluation, such as interviews, focus groups, document review, and literature comparison, and how key metrics from the program (enrollment, placement, completion, etc.) will be incorporated into the research design?
* Does the proposal describe strategies for obtaining required data and engaging directly with participants? What is MOED’s proposed role in those strategies, if any?
* Does the proposal include a strategy for assessing system-level change and institutional alignment to create stable pathways to employment and recovery for justice-involved individuals?
* Does the proposal designate a project manager and describe the responsibilities of the manager and key personnel? Is an outline showing estimated hours by each staff member by task provided? To what extent does the staffing plan describe align with the stated goals and objectives of the project?
* Does the proposal include a timeline for the project activities with clearly identified deliverables at each stage*?* Does the proposed timeline align with the requirements of the RFP and address all required deliverables?

**Budget (20 points)**

* Does the proposed budget align with the required scope of work?
* Is the proposed budget accurate and internally consistent?
* Does the proposal plan include performance levels, benchmarks, and methods and tools that will guarantee achievement of the selected goals?
* Is there evidence in the proposal of leveraging of resources and in-kind contributions, which will assist in meeting proposal outcomes?
* Does the projected budget effectively support the proposed program?