

**Allegheny County
Department of Human Services
Request for Proposals Q&A**

RFP for Housing-Focused Outreach for Individuals who are Unhoused

December 30, 2025

- 1. Our organization is an IT service company with experience in developing mobile applications. Will Allegheny County consider developing a web/mobile application as a tool for outreach to provide digital access to information about available shelters and housing, along with other available resources, such as information about non-profit organizations, food pantries, job openings, etc.?**

No.

- 2. Is there a preference for vendors based in Allegheny County? Considering our organization intends to provide IT services, we can work remotely to assist Allegheny County with its initiative to reach out to the vulnerable and homeless people.**

No, the Successful Proposer(s) does not need to be based in Allegheny County. We are interested in Proposers who can clearly demonstrate that they can successfully provide housing-focused and related outreach services for people experiencing homelessness in the County, as outlined in the RFP.

January 6, 2026

- 3. Will there be any type of pre-bid conference for those planning to participate in this RFP event?**

No.

January 13, 2026

- 4. What constitutes reasonable coverage at all hours**

DHS anticipates that the Successful Proposer(s) will provide key hours of coverage between 7 a.m. to 11 p.m., 7 days per week. Therefore, regularly staffed evening and weekend shifts and/or “on call” hours outside of the traditional Monday through Friday daytime hours will be viewed favorably.

5. What constitutes “some evenings or weekends”?

Please see our response to question 4.

6. Our model is person-centered and voluntary that requires consent. Does that align with the scope of the RFP, or are enforcement activities required?

Yes, you may apply and propose the indicated model. Additionally, DHS will not require enforcement activities from the Successful Proposer(s). However, DHS may require that the Successful Proposer(s) inform individuals when they are staying in unpermitted areas and will be expected to extend offers of support (e.g., shelter and housing).

7. Will an AlleghenyLink staff person be provided at night, because the Link closes at 5pm?

No. DHS will equip the Successful Proposer(s) with all necessary tools to conduct pre-eligibility screening for housing and other services themselves, as well as the resources to make referrals and warm hand-offs directly to those service providers, 24/7.

8. What is the County’s position on harm reduction supplies, as the City of Pittsburgh has a syringe exchange program that is approved by the Health Department and City Council?

While the County and DHS both support harm reduction, this RFP is not intended to support the purchase of harm reduction supplies.

9. If awarded, will we follow City policies as the employer?

Yes. Successful Proposers should continue to follow their organization’s policies and procedures.

10. If harm reduction supplies are allowed, can we purchase harm reduction supplies? What supplies will be eligible or ineligible?

Please see our response to question 8.

11. Do you allow the purchasing of food for the purpose of supporting participants?

Yes. All proposed costs will be considered for reasonableness by DHS, and the final budget and contract terms will be negotiated with the Successful Proposer(s).

12. Are you able to describe in more detail what type of staffing plan and coverage is expected of potential partners and proposals as it relates to non-traditional business hours?

This question comes from the following two lines that were included in the language of the RFP: 1) “Accept Real-Time Response assignments during traditional business hours, as well as some nights and weekends to support people experiencing homelessness;” & 2) “Provide reasonable coverage at all hours of the day and all days of the week”

DHS anticipates that the Successful Proposer(s) will provide key hours of coverage between 7 a.m. to 11 p.m., 7 days per week. Therefore, regularly staffed evening and weekend shifts and/or “on call” hours outside of the traditional Monday through Friday daytime hours will be viewed favorably.

Proposers should propose a staffing plan that ensures the appropriate staff coverage for their proposed service(s). Proposers should include in their staffing plan all staff positions and work hours/shift times for each position, number of staff, staff qualifications, in addition to recruitment, training and performance management for staff.

January 29, 2026

13. *Housing Assessments: Will contracted outreach staff be expected to complete Allegheny Link housing assessments directly in the field, or facilitate completion with Link staff? What technology platforms and training will DHS require or provide?*

Successful Proposers will be trained by DHS to conduct housing assessments in the field, in real-time, with simple devices such as smart phones and/or tablets. This will enable outreach to understand and share information about eligibility pathways with the clients they are supporting in the field. Technology needs should be included in proposal, if necessary.

While the ability to assess and register in real-time can improve the system and outcomes for clients, it is not mandatory in every case. If clients do not want to be

registered or assessed, Successful Proposers will not need to complete it. However, contact notes will still be required.

14. *Real-Time Response Definition:* How does DHS define “Real-Time Response” in practice? Is it limited to crisis situations (e.g., safety, medical, displacement), or does it also include lower-acuity referrals such as community complaints or welfare checks?

This system is new, and DHS will work with the Successful Proposer(s) to determine reasonable Real-Time Response times, depending upon the acuity of the situation. Successful Proposers are not intended to replace first responders (e.g., police, fire, Emergency Medical Services (EMS), etc.), yet response within an hour may be expected in timely situations. In other cases, response within a few days may be appropriate, depending on the circumstances and information provided.

For example: If we receive a request to check on someone who is sleeping on a heating grate Downtown at 2 p.m. Eastern Time on a Friday, we could request response within an hour. Alternatively, if we receive information that a person has been intermittently staying in a bus shelter in Turtle Creek but was last seen yesterday, we might ask that Successful Proposers check that location at key hours for the next week to attempt to make contact.

15. *Referral Sources:* What referral sources are expected to generate Real-Time Response assignments (e.g., 911, 211, first responders, community members, other outreach teams)?

All indicated sources may generate requests for assistance. However, all Real-Time Response requests would be evaluated and assigned to the Successful Proposer(s) by DHS.

16. *Dispatch Expectations:* Are providers expected to respond to all dispatches regardless of acuity, geography, or current outreach priorities?

Real-Time Responses will be assigned to Successful Proposers based on their staff availability, in addition to their familiarity with given geographies and communities, with the intent of having the most successful engagement with individuals in need of services. However, reasonable exceptions will be made for extreme weather, safety concerns, or other outstanding issues.

Appropriate response times will be discussed with the Successful Proposer(s) depending on the anticipated needs of individuals and/or encampments in question. DHS will be realistic with partners about response times, but the aim of this solicitation is to create an organized system capable of responding to all relevant incidents and concerns County-wide in a reliable, timely manner.

17. *Response Timelines: What constitutes a “prompt” or “same-day” response, particularly in relation to staffing levels, weather conditions, geography, and competing outreach demands?*

Please see our response to question 16.

18. *Declining or Delaying Responses: Under what circumstances may providers decline or delay a Real-Time Response assignment (e.g., safety concerns, staff capacity, clinical appropriateness), and how should those decisions be documented?*

Please see our response to question 16.

19. *Data Scope and Evolution: Beyond the minimum data elements listed in the RFP, what additional data points does DHS anticipate requiring as the program evolves, and will a clear data dictionary or reporting framework be provided prior to contract execution?*

Data will be collected by the Successful Proposer(s) in a new application designed for Real-Time Response deployment, as well as systems for case notes and desired services. Such client-level data will be used for the purpose of determining individuals' eligibility to access housing, behavioral health programs, and other services offered through DHS. System-level data will be used primarily for service coordination, performance evaluation, policy planning, and federal reporting.

Data points will be agreed upon in collaboration with the Successful Proposer(s) during the Contracting Process. All personal data sharing is fully voluntary from individuals engaged by the Successful Proposer(s), but Proposers are encouraged to describe how they inform and obtain consent in their Proposal. Moreover, Successful Proposers will never be expected to share personal-level data with Law Enforcement.

20. *Individual-Level Data Collection:* What specific individual-level data will outreach staff be expected to collect beyond basic identifying information (e.g., precise location or encampment data, substance use status, behavioral health indicators, risk flags)?

Please see our response to question 19.

21. *Purpose and Use of Data:* What is the intended system-level use of these data (e.g., service coordination, performance evaluation, policy planning)?

Please see our response to question 19.

22. *Informed Consent:* Will clients be informed about what data is collected, how it is shared, and how it may affect their access to services?

Please see our response to question 19.

23. *Trust-Based Exceptions:* How should outreach teams document situations where collecting certain data would undermine trust, safety, or engagement, and how will that be reflected in performance expectations?

Please see our response to question 19.

24. *Data Ethics and Client Trust:* How will DHS ensure that sensitive data—particularly related to substance use, mental health, or precise location—is used to support care and housing outcomes rather than surveillance, enforcement, or displacement?

DHS collects and stores this data securely and has experience ensuring that it is used exclusively to support care. DHS will never share collected Mental Health or Substance Use Disorder (SUD) related case notes or data with Law Enforcement, nor would we permit the Successful Proposer(s) to do so. Successful Proposers will collect data only to support care, such as Behavioral Health program access or housing placement.

25. *First Responder Collaboration:* Can DHS clarify expectations for collaboration with first responders, particularly distinguishing between law enforcement,

fire, EMS, and crisis services? Are outreach staff expected to respond alongside police, follow up afterward, or both?

Successful Proposers will not be expected to work directly with first responders, except in cases where the health or safety of unsheltered individuals was at risk. DHS will use information from first responders and others to engage outreach as needed.

In cases of geographically focused housing efforts or unmitigated safety issues that lead a municipality to decommission an “encampment”, the Successful Proposer(s) will work with DHS to inform individuals of the policy changes in a given area. Successful Proposers will then support individuals to identify shelter, housing needs and desires, and appropriate social services.

26. *Caseload Expectations: The Housing-Focused Outreach model recommends caseloads of no more than 15 clients per outreach worker. Is DHS expecting this ratio to apply countywide, per geographic zone, or per intensive housing navigation cohort?*

DHS is not interested in Successful Proposers maintaining a caseload. While personal relationships are critical, we expect the Successful Proposer(s) to engage whoever is experiencing unsheltered homelessness and support them to identify and access shelter and housing. We are interested in contacts made, and people supported to move toward stability.

27. *Outreach Before Housing Readiness: How does DHS value and account for engagement work that precedes housing readiness—particularly for individuals with long histories of unsheltered homelessness, trauma, or distrust of systems—and how should this work be documented within program expectations?*

DHS understands that unsheltered individuals may present to the Successful Proposer(s) significantly varying degrees of readiness to accept housing. The Successful Proposer(s) will not be expected to move all unhoused individuals toward housing regardless of readiness but should maintain housing as the eventual goal for everyone.

28. *If two organization are working together to deliver a service, should we submit one or two Proposals?*

Collaborative Proposals, in which two or more organizations partner together, should submit one Proposal. Entities may participate in more than one collaborative Proposal. Please review Section 4.1.c for more details.