

BOSTON PUBLIC HEALTH COMMISSION

Executive Office



REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

for the procurement of

EVALUATOR

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

December 27, 2022

I. Overview

The Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) is the local public health department for the City of Boston. Public service and access to quality healthcare is the cornerstone of our mission - to protect, preserve, and promote the health and well-being of all Boston residents, particularly the most vulnerable.

Since January 2022, the BPHC and the City of Boston housed unsheltered individuals with substance use disorder (SUD) living in a tent encampment in an area of Boston at the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue and Melnea Cass Boulevard referred to as “Mass. & Cass.” This effort was accomplished through the creation of low-threshold housing (congregate and non-congregate sites) and permanent supportive housing.

Given the disproportionate impact of unsheltered homelessness and the substance use crisis on communities of color in Boston, this effort aimed to address racial inequities in access to housing. To evaluate and further engage the community and key stakeholders in this response, BPHC applied for and was awarded a three-year federal grant from the Office of Minority Health (OMH), *Community Driven Approaches to Address Factors Contributing to Structural Racism in Public Health*. See attached draft Project Fact Sheet and Logic Model for background about the OMH grant project. The purpose of this Request for Proposals (RFP) is to solicit an evaluator through the OMH grant to assess the racial equity of housing policies for people with SUD in Boston.

II. RFP Timeline

A summary of the Request for Proposal (RFP) timeline is provided in the table below.

Request for Proposal Timeline	
December 23, 2022	Legal Notice Publication in the Boston Globe
December 27, 2022	RFP posted online at www.bphc.org/RFP by 10:00 AM EST. RFP will also be disseminated via email to relevant networks.
January 9, 2023	RFP questions due via email by 4:00 pm EST. Send questions via email to: Krystal Garcia, MSPH, Director of Policy at: kgarcia@bphc.org Subject: <i>Questions for RFP Evaluation of Structural Racism of Housing and SUD</i>
January 13, 2023	RFP responses to questions available at Evaluation of Structural Racism of Housing and SUD Boston.gov by 5:00 pm EST.
January 27, 2023	Proposals due via email by 9:00 am EST to: Procurement@bphc.org Subject: <i>Proposal for Evaluation of Structural Racism of Housing and SUD</i>

	NO EXCEPTIONS TO THIS DEADLINE
	Interviews may be scheduled with applicants prior to award decision.
February 10, 2023	<p>Notification of Decision: Selected candidate will be notified of award by 5:00 pm EST.</p> <p>BPHC has the discretion to extend this time period without notice to the proposers. All proposals shall remain valid and open for a period of one-hundred and twenty (12) days from the proposal submission date unless a proposer notifies BPHC of its withdrawal. In addition, BPHC may cancel this bid if funding does not become available for the project.</p>
February 16, 2023	<p>Required meeting with BPHC Grants team on or before this date.</p> <p>Tentative meeting time 1:00pm – 2:00pm EST</p>

The Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) is committed to contracting with a diverse group of businesses particularly those often underrepresented in government contracting. As part of your application, please indicate if your business is one of the following: Minority-owned (MBE), Women-owned (WBE), Veteran-owned (VBE), Service-disabled Veteran-owned (SDVOBE), Disability-owned (DOBE), Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender-owned (LGBTBE), or a Local business (within City of Boston). If your business is a Certified Under-represented Business Enterprise in any of these areas, please attach documentation of certification.

III. Background

The Mass. and Cass area of Boston, which refers to a three-quarter mile radius from the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue and Melnea Cass Boulevard (referred to as “Mass. & Cass”), has long experienced congregation of individuals experiencing chronic homelessness and substance use disorder.

To address the public health crisis in the Mass. & Cass neighborhood, and the entrenched tent encampment at the time, the City supported the transition of individuals living in tents to low-barrier housing and shelter alternatives in Boston on January 12, 2022 to connect those unsheltered individuals with SUD to newly established low-threshold housing sites in the city and appropriate services.

To understand individual needs and support the response, the Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) conducted a survey of all residents in the Mass. & Cass tent encampment between December 6 and December 9, 2021, to better understand individuals’ demographics and medical and housing needs. Of the 144 individuals surveyed who were living the tent encampment in the Mass. & Cass area, the majority of those surveyed were people of color; 37% of people identified as Hispanic or Latinx, 22% as Black; 3% as multi-racial or other; and 38% as White.

Low-Threshold Transitional Housing Sites

The City worked with partners to open the following six low-threshold congregate or transitional housing sites, resulting in approximately 200 beds across all six programs comprised of three congregate (shelter-based) sites with 75 beds) and three non-congregate (hotel rooms and cottages) with 130 beds.

The City's response prioritized equity to ensure individuals across race, ethnicity, gender, and age had fair access to the new low-threshold transitional housing resources. Harm reduction, an evidence-based practice for connecting individuals to care, was also prioritized in this response. A "housing first" approach was implemented, and substance use was not a barrier to housing access. These alternative sites are known as "low-threshold" because they are easier to access and more supportive for individuals with a substance use disorder. They remove policies that previously posed barriers to people with SUD, such as sobriety requirements and ability to come and go as needed during stay.

Meant to be an intermediate, *temporary step between* programs, the low-threshold site programs meet people where they are in their recovery process and help them *transition* to long-term housing and/or treatment. Once in the low-threshold housing spaces, programs offer or refer residents to services and initiate a housing navigation pathway, with the goal of accessing a housing resource and permanent supportive housing. The City established [low-threshold practice guidance](#) based on best practices. Services offered vary by site and include, and include:

- Program staffing and security
- Provision of or connection to medical care, including primary care
- Access to or active referral to medication for opioid use disorder (MOUD)
- Access to or provision of other substance use support services (i.e., recovery coaching; counseling)
- Access to or provision of mental health services
- Housing navigation services
- Development of transition plans for seamless move to permanent housing

Relevant Data Collection Initiatives

Each of the six programs enters program data including client demographic information, attendance, service received, and move-out reason (including housing). This data is used to populate the [Mass. & Cass data dashboard](#), and reviewed monthly and program changes addressed in response to the data through collaborative planning with the six low-threshold site providers during weekly calls.

In addition to the tent encampment survey referenced previously, BPHC conducted an equity analysis (see Appendix C in [Long-term Strategic Public Health Outlook: Serving the Mass. & Cass area and unsheltered individuals in Boston](#)) to determine the race, gender, and age impact of the initial housing placement initiative.

Three to six months following the initial placement, BPHC conducted a follow-up survey of the individuals from the tent encampment at three to six months following the clearing of the encampment to understand the impact of the low-threshold housing placement initiative on their health and well-being. This evaluation includes findings from 63 of the individuals reached. Findings highlight the positive impact the program had on participant quality of life, access to services, and substance use.

IV. Scope of Work

This RFP is soliciting an evaluator to conduct a rigorous evaluation of the racial equity impact of this housing policy on housing access for unhoused unsheltered individuals with SUD in Boston. Findings will be used to inform equitable programs and policies focused on providing safe and sustainable housing and critical support services for unsheltered residents of Boston experiencing SUD. The evaluation design should incorporate performance monitoring and improvement as well as systematic evaluation to determine the processes, outcomes, and impact of project activities.

This RFP is seeking an evaluator to conduct a longitudinal evaluation design focusing on the unsheltered unhoused individuals with SUD in Boston, and those who were housed as part of the low-threshold policy response since January 2022. In addition, the evaluation methodology should include qualitative and quantitative components and be guided by a quality improvement framework to continually evaluate the racial equity impact of changes to policies and programs. The evaluation plan should include a description of evaluation methods, deliverables, and timelines for each of the following funding periods (subject to contract renewal and funding):

- February 1 – September 29, 2023
- October 2, 2023 – September 30, 2024
- October 1, 2024 – September 29, 2025

Recently added demographic information can now allow for a comprehensive equity analysis to assess the impact of housing initiative 12 months after the start on addressing racial equity outcomes of housing. Analysis of services received and outcomes, and differences by site type will also be needed to identify key programmatic elements that support racially equitable positive outcomes.

In addition to this 12-month and quarterly analysis, there is a need to assess longer-term outcomes of permanent supportive housing by race to determine the longer-term outcomes of this housing policy change on addressing structural racism (including housing status). Furthermore, qualitative methods can be utilized to by obtaining stakeholder, provider, and participant perspectives to further understand patterns identified in the data.

Ultimately these evaluation findings will be shared with the BPHC and City of Boston partners and community stakeholders in an ongoing manner to inform further policy and program changes needed to impact structural racism in housing outcomes. In turn, future evaluation will evaluate the impact of these efforts. Through a 2.5-year evaluation process, the intent is to conduct ongoing evaluation cycles of the housing policy and initiatives to assess any changes and continually use evaluation data to inform programmatic and policy changes.

The aims of the evaluation are as follows:

1. **Determine the impact of structural racism on the existing policies and practices for people experiencing homelessness and substance use disorder (SUD) in Boston.**
2. **Identify the racial equity impact of transitional and permanent supportive housing programs for people in Boston experiencing unsheltered homelessness and SUD.**

3. **Identify changes to housing policies and determine the impact of policy changes on structural racism following implementation throughout project; and**
4. **Identify the critical components of housing policies and practices predictive of racially equitable outcomes.**

The evaluation plan should address how the Evaluator would address the evaluation questions throughout the project duration and explain what data, measures, and sources will be assessed to gather the information. The evaluation plan should address a mixed methods evaluation plan and activities to be conducted in Year 1, Year 2, and Year 3 of the evaluation (quantitative, qualitative, and quality improvement methods). Consideration of the following should be included in the evaluation plan.

- **Year One:** focus on formative evaluation, including conduct equity analysis of the low-threshold and longer-term housing placement policy implementation since January 2022); revise Logic Model upon start of project to identify program process, outcome measures, and impact to be evaluated by Evaluator throughout project, identify policy changes based on data findings, and continually assess outcomes; and collect qualitative data from providers and/or clients to document experiences with policy implementation or impact of policy on clients' lives.
- **Year Two:** conduct ongoing equity analysis of policy and outcomes identified as a result of policy changes; collect qualitative data from providers and/or clients to document experiences with policy implementation or impact of policy on clients' lives; refine impact evaluation plan with comparison group for implementation in Year Three.
- **Year Three:** conduct ongoing equity analysis and implement impact analysis of policy intervention; collect additional qualitative data to explain findings observed.

The Evaluator should perform the following activities that will gather information to answer several questions to address the evaluation aims stated above. Specific activities and deliverables include, but are not limited to:

- Utilize racial equity policy evaluation framework for guiding evaluation methods and process.
- Develop comprehensive, rigorous mixed-methods Evaluation Plan that includes data provided by housing providers, participants, partnering organizations and services providers, and secondary data sources as relevant. Methodology should incorporate a comparison group or comparison to past data outcomes obtained through secondary data.
- Develop and implement a detailed work plan including timelines, deliverables, and persons responsible.
- Develop or identify data collection tools and processes.
- Submit IRB application(s) in accordance with BPHC practice and procedures.
- Work with BPHC leadership and stakeholder representatives to document program models.
- Collect, manage, and store high-quality data in a confidential and ethical manner.
- Meet with BPHC evaluation team twice a month to review progress, share updates, and resolve issues related to the evaluation, and as needed.
- Complete quarterly evaluation reports as part of OMH Grant reporting requirements, and annual evaluation report to be shared with the BPHC Evaluation Team.
- Develop PowerPoint presentation(s) and present findings to the BPHC team, city partners, and community stakeholders as scheduled by BPHC Evaluation Team.
- Include visually engaging infographics and data presentation approaches in presentation and report design.

- Revise final PowerPoint based on team feedback.
- Develop final evaluation report to share with Evaluation Team and other stakeholders.
- Revise final Evaluation Report based on team feedback.
- With approval from BPHC Evaluation Team, collaborate in the development of manuscripts and presentations with BPHC team.

To support the evaluators' ability to develop and implement a rigorous mixed-methods evaluation BPHC will:

- establish a BPHC OMH Grant Evaluation Team to ensure collaboration with the Evaluator
- schedule calls weekly, bimonthly, or monthly to discuss evaluation plan and updates
- identify key stakeholders and make introductions as needed
- engage Evaluator in stakeholder meetings, as relevant
- provide relevant documents and data that are needed for the evaluation
- provide ongoing situational awareness around events and actions that directly impact the evaluation

V. Minimum Qualifications

The qualified evaluator must meet the following requirements:

- Experience conducting policy evaluations with a race equity focus among people experiencing homelessness, substance use disorder, and individuals with co-occurring mental and substance use disorders; (or similarly marginalized communities).
- Knowledge of literature and comparative measures/findings in the area of unsheltered unhoused populations with SUD nationally and in Boston.
- Expertise in designing and implementing longitudinal evaluation designs.
- Expertise in implementing qualitative evaluation methods, including identification of program models, provider interviews, participant interviews, and focus groups.
- Knowledge and experience with harm reduction approaches.
- Implementation of evaluation methodology from a race equity framework.
- Demonstrated ability to reach participants in a culturally sensitive and gender-affirming way.
- Experience developing Institutional Review Board (IRB) applications.
- Procedures and data systems that ensure participant data privacy and protections.
- Demonstrated experience writing evaluation reports and PowerPoint presentations.
- Knowledge of culturally responsive evaluation and equitable evaluation frameworks; and
- Knowledge and familiarity with Boston communities and neighborhoods strongly desired.

Entities involved in the implementation of this initiative are not eligible to apply.

VI. Proposal Requirements

Proposal sections should include the following:

1. **Organizational Experience:** *What relevant experience does your organizations have?* Description of relevant organizational experience with similar evaluation projects and populations, including organizational resources that will be leveraged to implement this project.
2. **Understanding of the Need.** *What role does structural racism play in unsheltered homelessness?* Overview of the literature, program-level policies and structural racism that contribute to people

experiencing unsheltered homelessness. This section should demonstrate an understanding of strategies put into place in Boston to address unsheltered homelessness of people with SUD.

3. **Evaluation Methodology.** *What evaluation methodology would you use to address the evaluation priorities?* Detailed summary of the evaluation methodology approach and how this will be accomplished. Describe when the evaluator will share drafts and evaluation learnings with the BPHC evaluation team for review and feedback. This section should also address primary approaches to data analysis, including:
 - a) How the design and implementation will meaningfully incorporate racial justice and equity
 - b) How the evaluation will incorporate the voices of those most impacted
 - c) How the evaluation will incorporate the use of a comparison group
 - d) How the evaluation will incorporate additional data (administrative data, program data, etc.)
 - e) Specific considerations that address enhancing participant and comparison engagement and follow-up for repeated measures
 - f) How the design (including analysis) will address issues related to Racial Justice and Equity

4. **Workplan.** *What is the proposed timeline for each activity?* Provide a work plan for key activities indicating activity, timeline to be completed, and person(s) responsible. IRB application and review to be included in this plan. Proposed evaluation workplan with activity, timeline, measurable outcome to be completed for February 1, 2023 – September 29, 2025, for the following time periods:
 - February 1 – September 29, 2023
 - October 2, 2023 – September 30, 2024
 - October 1, 2024 – September 29, 2025

5. **Staffing Plan.** *What is the staffing plan and experience to complete the work in an effective and timely manner?* Describe the staffing plan with a brief description of proposed staff roles and qualifications, with particular description of staff expertise and sensitivity of methodologies and approach in evaluating structural racism in public health. Include CVs of key personnel as attachments (CVs do not count toward the page limit).

6. **Challenges and Solutions.** *What are some of the anticipated challenges in implementing this evaluation and how would they be resolved?* Explain challenges to this evaluation and how you will address them to accomplish the evaluation aims.

7. **Budget and Budget Justification.** *What budget requirements are needed to complete the evaluation?* Include a proposed budget for each of the project years listed above and a budget narrative justification of line-item costs for all costs associated with the evaluation, including personnel, direct costs, any consultant or subcontract costs, and indirect costs.

VII. Period of Performance and Funding Amount

The period of performance for this evaluation is February 1, 2023 – September 29, 2023, with the option of renewal for three years depending on performance, evaluation scope, and budget through September 29, 2025.

Period of Performance: The duration of this evaluation project is February 1, 2023, through September 29, 2023, with option of renewal through September 29, 2025.

Total Budget: Total budget shall not exceed \$120,000 in the first year (8 months), and up to \$120,000 for each 12 months thereafter through September 29, 2025. Include procurement language about funding contingent upon performance and availability of funds.

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).

VIII. Proposal Scoring

Proposal Section	Points
Organizational Experience	15
Understanding of the Need	10
Evaluation Methodology	20
Workplan	10
Staffing Plan	15
Challenges and Solutions	10
Budget and Budget Justification	20
Total Points	100

IX. Submission Instructions

Qualified applicants shall submit proposals electronically by 9:00 am EST on January 27, 2023, to:

Email: Procurement@bphc.org

Subject: *Proposal for Evaluation of Structural Racism of Housing and SUD*