

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The overall objective for this competitive solicitation is to establish contracts with community-based organizations for services that promote self-sufficiency across the Life Continuum in an amount not to exceed \$13,808,258 per 12-month period. The contracted services shall target people who are residents of Austin and/or Travis County with gross income at or below 200% of federal poverty guidelines, with exceptions to this eligibility requirement for services designed specifically for homeless individuals and families and services designed specifically for victims of sexual and domestic violence.

To that end, the City of Austin (City) seeks applications in response to this Request for Applications (RFA) from qualified providers (Applicants) with demonstrated experience in providing social services to children, youth, adults and families, and/or seniors and persons with disabilities with diverse needs along a self-sufficiency continuum. The City requests applications that address social services' self-sufficiency goals across the Life Continuum.

### 1.1 Self-sufficiency Goals:

- a. Safety Net/Infrastructure Services: Ensure that no person is without such basic necessities as food, clothing, health, shelter, and behavioral health care, or constitutionally-guaranteed legal rights
- b. Transition Out of Poverty: Ensure developmental, educational, employment and other special opportunities for disadvantaged persons to further self-reliance
- c. Problem Prevention: Deter the growth of problem conditions at the individual and community level through education, preventive physical and behavioral health programs, crime prevention and other preventive programs
- d. Universal Support Services: Provide family and societal support services in response to long-term issues such as poverty and new problems created by urbanization and technological advances. These include education, child care, counseling and assistance for the aging, youth, homeless, and unemployed, rehabilitation services and other support rehabilitation services
- e. Enrichment: Encourage personal development and community enrichment through cultural and educational programs

### 1.2 Life Continuum Categories:

- a. Early Childhood: Represents the critical developmental period from birth through 5 years old. It provides the continuum of care (prevention, intervention, and treatment) that nurtures children to their optimal development in all domains: physical, social, emotional, language, and intellectual. Early childhood services support the evidence that children's development is intertwined with their environments and relationships at home, at school, and in the community, and with the adults in those environments including parents/families, caregivers, teachers, and service providers.
- b. Youth: Focuses on the lives and needs of youth and adolescents, defined as individuals ages 6-21, by addressing areas of opportunity, out of school time, youth enrichment, and healthy development. Through the participation of these programs, youth are given the tools to successfully transition through the educational continuum to employment; experience physical and emotional well-being; understand learning and training opportunities; and experience positive growth for themselves and their community.
- c. Adults and Families: Focuses on assisting adults and families with meeting their essential needs and improving or maintaining their quality of life by providing basic needs, housing and homeless services, behavioral health, workforce development and other social services.

- d. **Seniors & Persons with Disabilities:** With a rapidly growing number of seniors, defined as individuals of 55 years of age or older, and a significant population of people with disabilities, including both physical and mental disabilities, services to these individuals are intended to help them maintain dignity, independent living, housing stability, and to assist with basic needs.

Contracts entered into under this RFA are anticipated to be for an initial three-year period, beginning October 1, 2015, with three one-year renewal options for a total contract period not to exceed six (6) years. All contracts awarded through this solicitation will require authorization of the Austin City Council. The City Council has directed that final contract decisions be consistent with the goals of the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan and other community plans outlined in this solicitation.

## 2. BACKGROUND

### A Focus on Self-Sufficiency Across the Life Continuum

In preparation for this RFA, the City engaged a broad range of stakeholders in community conversations and consulted various local, state, and federal action plans and reports. These efforts highlighted issue areas that promote self-sufficiency across the Life Continuum such as: 1) Basic Needs, 2) Behavioral Health, 3) Child and Youth Services, 4) Homeless Services, and 5) Workforce Development.

The following plans and reports identify significant needs in our community, gaps in services, and/or best practices for strategies that foster and support self-sufficiency for individuals and families. This is a partial list of the documents used and does not include all applicable plans and reports.

- a. *School Readiness Action Plan* (May 2012), UnitedWay
- b. *Priority Outcomes for Child and Youth Well-being*, (2012) Ready by 21 Coalition of Central Texas
- c. *Travis County Community Impact Report* (2012), Travis County HHS & VS
- d. *Hunger and Homelessness Survey* (Dec 2012), The U.S. Conference of Mayors
- e. *CAN Community Dashboard* (2012, 2013), Community Advancement Network
- f. *Permanent Supportive Housing Strategy* (September 2010), City of Austin & CSH
- g. *Home Health Quality Initiative* (April 2013), Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
- h. *10 Year Plan to End Homelessness* (2010), Ending Community Homelessness Coalition
- i. *American Community Survey* (2012), U.S. Census Bureau – and the *Travis County Snapshot from the 2012 American Community Survey*, Travis County HHS & VS
- j. *SAMHSA's National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices* (2013), The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
- k. *Austin/Travis County Community Health Assessment* (2012), A/TCHHSD, Travis County HHS & VS, Central Health, St. David's Foundation, Seton Healthcare Family, UTHSC
- l. *Mayor's Mental Health Task Force Final Report* (2005), Austin/Travis County Behavioral Health Planning Partnership
- m. *Embracing an Age Diverse Austin: Mayor's Task Force on Aging Report and Recommendations* (2013), Mayor's Task Force on Aging
- n. *Imagine Austin* (2012), City of Austin

As the community's social and economic environment continues to change, the City will invest in social services that focus on promoting and sustaining self-sufficiency for targeted individuals and families across the Life Continuum.

### 3. PRINCIPAL OBJECTIVE & GOALS

This RFA establishes an open and competitive process which encourages applications that are client-centered and employ evidence-based or promising practices that promote self-sufficiency across the Life Continuum. This RFA requires the service strategy/strategies proposed be consistent with one or more of the goals outlined below:

a. Early Childhood:

1. **READY FAMILIES GOALS:** Parents have a secure attachment to their infants and young children. Parents respond appropriately to their children's cues. Families provide stimulating learning experiences for their children prior to school entry. Families are financially stable.
2. **READY SERVICES: EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION GOALS:** Affordable, accessible early education services are available for all families. Available early education services are culturally relevant, healthful, engaging, rigorous, and are of sufficient quality to measurably impact school readiness outcomes.
3. **READY SERVICES: PREVENTATIVE PRIMARY CARE & MENTAL HEALTH GOALS:** Children and family members are linked to preventative physical and mental health services and treatment as needed. Children with developmental delays are referred to appropriate services.
4. **READY CHILDREN GOALS:** Low-income Travis County children ages 0–5 are happy, healthy and prepared for school success.

***(School Readiness Action Plan)***

b. Youth:

1. Children, youth and young adults:
  - i. Are physically healthy
  - ii. Are physically safe
  - iii. Respect diversity and demonstrate empathy and pro-social behaviors
  - iv. Engage in community, school and/or extracurricular activities
  - v. Are aware of, appreciate and demonstrate behaviors of personal and social responsibility
  - vi. Have good mental health and are emotionally resilient
  - vii. Avoid risky behaviors
  - viii. Are academically successful
  - ix. Have awareness and positive attitudes about adult careers
  - x. Graduate from high school college- and/or career-ready and prepared for a Life of learning
  - xi. Successfully complete post-secondary education or training
  - xii. Are productive and equipped to reach financial self-sufficiency

***(Ready by 21)***

c. Adults and Families:

1. **Basic Needs:** Individuals and families have resources for the most fundamental aspects of daily living such as food, housing, utilities, safety and personal care.

Basic needs services are often emergency or short-term services provided during/after a crisis or following a prolonged period of extremely limited resources. Typically these needs must be met before an individual or family has the capacity to transition out of poverty and into self-sufficiency.

2. Homeless & Housing Services: People at risk of becoming homeless, the situational homeless and the chronic homeless will be identified early and receive the assistance they need to maintain and receive appropriate housing (**Ending Community Homeless Coalition - ECHO**). People experiencing homelessness have access to a safe and secure environment where they are offered a variety of services, including case management, safe sleep, mental/physical supports, and resource information to address a variety of needs. Individuals and families who have experienced violence or abuse have access to trauma-informed emergency shelter, transitional and/or other housing and support services to stabilize, heal, and build self-sufficiency.
  3. Behavioral Health: Austin/Travis County will be a community that promotes the mental and physical health of its residents and all persons of all cultures and all special populations will have access to prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery support services of substance use disorders and mental illness (**Behavioral Health Planning Partnership**).
  4. Workforce Development: Individuals are connected to jobs with good wages, benefits and career path opportunities to transition out of poverty and promote self-sufficiency. In many cases, for individuals to successfully transition into sustained employment, basic adult education and language acquisition services are required in addition to certifications and skills based instruction. Improve access to high quality adult education, including ESL, GED, ABE, computer literacy, financial literacy and health literacy to obtain literacy skills necessary for self-sufficiency (**Literacy Coalition of Central Texas**). Reduce disparities in education, employment and income (**Workforce Solutions Strategic Plan, Overarching Goals**).
- d. Seniors & Persons with Disabilities:
1. Seniors:
    - i. Provide a continuum of services and supports that help older adults “age in place/community” and avoid premature or unnecessary institutionalization (e.g., hospital, nursing homes, etc.)
    - ii. Provide services that focus on the cognitive and mental/behavioral health of older adults such as late-life depression, anxiety, suicide prevention, substance abuse, and dementia.
    - iii. Ensure access to meaningful opportunities for recreation and social engagement to avoid isolation, loneliness and depression.
    - iv. Support family caregivers with services that promote their self-care, health and effectiveness (e.g., respite care, education, therapeutic counseling).
    - v. Provide access to safe and affordable housing that allows older adults to age in place and have access to transportation options.  
(**Mayor’s Task Force on Aging 2013**)
  2. Persons with Disabilities:
    - vi. Provide a continuum of services and supports throughout the person’s Life to remain in community-based settings and avoid institutionalization (e.g., State Supported Living Center, prison, nursing homes, etc.).

- vii. Provide services and resources that support families and caregivers for the Life of the person with a disability (e.g., respite care, education, transitional services, etc.).
- viii. Provide access to affordable housing options that include accessible transportation opportunities to work, healthcare, shopping, education and play.
- ix. Provide opportunities for persons with disabilities to be employed in non-segregated, regular workplaces.
- x. Ensure access to meaningful day activities for adults with disabilities to avoid isolation, depression, and victimization

***(Sources: Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Coalition; “Community Integration for People with Disabilities: Key Principles.”)***

#### 4. CONNECTION TO IMAGINE AUSTIN

The Applicant shall indicate how the proposed strategy/strategies correspond to the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan vision statement and one or more of its core mission statements.

The Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan vision statement states:

**“Austin is a beacon of sustainability, social equity, and economic opportunity; where diversity and creativity are celebrated; where community needs and values are recognized; where leadership comes from its citizens, and where the necessities of life are affordable and accessible to all.”**

Imagine Austin’s core mission statements, as they relate to the City’s social service investments, are as follows:

**Austin is Livable:** All residents have a variety of urban, suburban, and semi-rural lifestyle choices with access to quality schools, libraries, parks and recreation, health and human services, and other outstanding public facilities and services.

- a. Austin’s diverse population is active and healthy, with access to locally-grown, nourishing foods and affordable healthcare

**Austin is Educated:** Austin provides everyone with an equal opportunity for the highest quality of education that allows them to fully develop their potential. Networks of community partnerships support our schools and ensure that our children receive the resources and services they need to thrive and learn.

- a. Our school campuses provide safe and stable environments enabling future success
- b. Every child in Austin has the chance to engage with other cultures, communities, and languages, providing pathways for healthy development and the critical thinking skills students need as future citizens of Austin and the world.

**Austin is Prosperous:** Austin’s prosperity exists because of the overall health, vitality, and sustainability of the city as a whole — including the skills, hard work, and qualities of our citizens, the stewardship of our natural resources, and developing conditions that foster both local businesses and large institutions.

- a. Equitable opportunities are accessible to all through quality education, training, and good jobs

**Austin Values and Respects its People:** Austin is its people. Our city is home to engaged, compassionate, creative, and independent thinking people, where diversity is a source of strength, and where we have the opportunity to fully participate and fulfill our potential. People across all parts of the city and of ages and income levels live in safe, stable neighborhoods with a variety of affordable and accessible homes with access to healthy food, economic opportunity, healthcare, education, and transportation

(<http://assets.austintexas.gov//webiacpfullreduced.pdf>).

## 5. PROGRAM STRATEGIES & TARGET POPULATION

The City is intentionally leaving program strategies and target population options open beyond the criteria listed in this section for the areas described above, allowing Applicants to propose solutions to maintain, improve, or promote self-sufficiency throughout the Life Continuum in an effective and successful manner for the target population identified. Applicants are encouraged to incorporate strategies that reflect evidence-based or promising practices and the proposed strategies shall be aligned with the Life Continuum goals outlined in Section 3 of this RFA.

The Applicant shall clearly identify the primary Life continuum category addressed by their application. Any additional Life continuum category/categories being addressed shall also be identified. Applicants may propose multiple strategies either within the same application or in separate applications as appropriate for their targeted population(s).

Applicants shall clearly identify the target population(s) they plan to serve. If applicable, Applicants shall describe how they will serve clients who have a criminal history.

The services the City will purchase will include the following characteristics:

- a. Are client-centered with a holistic approach
- b. Serves high-risk clients living at or below 200% of poverty with significant and/or multiple barriers to self-sufficiency and stability
- c. Are Integrated with the community to improve access to supportive services
- d. Links client and services to other City-funded or City-operated services

The applicant shall also provide data to demonstrate the need for the strategy/strategies being proposed. Data should include but is not limited to:

- a. Target Population demographic/Census data
- b. Target Population unmet need(s)
- c. Applicant's trends in Target Population unmet need(s)
- d. Waiting list information (if applicable)
- e. Data from community databases, such as Homeless Management Information System, showing Target Population unmet need(s) (if applicable)

If the proposed strategies cut across the Life Continuum and or are collaborative with other service provider, Applicants shall indicate how the proposed strategies will be implemented to successfully reach individuals in multiple Life Continuum categories and/or how the

proposed collaborative will successfully work together to maximize service delivery to the target populations.

Applicants may submit one or more applications as a primary contractor and may choose to participate as a subcontractor or partner in another application.

## **6. OUTCOMES & OUTPUTS**

One or more of the following high-level outcomes designed to demonstrate progress in self-sufficiency through the Life Continuum is required for all applications. Additional outcomes may also be proposed which show the connection to primary and secondary Life continuum category/categories, if applicable.

1. Percent of households who maintain housing or transition into housing
2. Percent of individuals who maintain or increase income
3. Percent of individuals who make progress toward treatment plan goals
4. Percent of children and youth who progress to the next developmental or academic level
5. Percent of individuals who demonstrate improved life skills and/or knowledge

All applications shall also include the following high-level output. Additional outputs may also be proposed which show the connection to primary and secondary Life continuum category/categories, if applicable.

1. Number of unduplicated clients served per 12-month contract period
2. Number of unduplicated clients served during the initial 36-month contract period

## **7. ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES**

The eligibility guidelines for this RFA are outlined in Section 0610 – City of Austin Health and Human Services Department Client Eligibility Guidelines. The City requires all awarded agencies to maintain a complete and current record of client eligibility throughout the entire contract period (e.g. client file or electronic record) that includes documentation of the elements listed in Section 0610

Applicants may propose alternate eligibility criteria from the guidelines in Section 0610 for the proposed target population(s). If applicable, Applicants shall clearly define the proposed alternate eligibility criteria.

Applicants shall describe how the City of Austin Health and Human Service Department Client Eligibility Guidelines (Section 0610) or the proposed alternate eligibility criteria will be documented for the target population(s) identified in the application.

## **8. FUNDING INFORMATION**

- a. \$13,808,258 is available per 12-month period for all Life continuum categories for a total three-year amount of \$41,424,774 dependent upon Austin City Council approval.
  1. The following funding amounts are available for each Life continuum category per 12-month period:
    - i. Early Childhood - \$989,525
    - ii. Youth - \$1,915,630
    - iii. Adults and Family - \$7,327,622
    - iv. Seniors and People with Disabilities - \$813,804
    - v. \$2,761,677 is available to be awarded in any Life Continuum category
- b. Applicants shall apply for at least \$50,000 per 12-month period.
- c. It is the City's intent to provide initial three-year contract with three (3) one-year renewal options, for a total contract period not to exceed six (6) years. The initial three-year contract funding period will be October 1, 2015, through September 30, 2018.
- d. The City of Austin reserves the right to adjust the contract amount or scope of work over the contract period based on community needs, applicant's ability to expend funds in a timely manner or any other factor. When the City determines adjustments need to be made, the City will provide at least 90-day notice to the contractor.

## 9. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

- a. Any nonprofit or governmental agency that can legally contract with the City (as verified by the City Purchasing Office).
  1. City policy does not permit entering into a contract with an entity that owes taxes to the City.
  2. The Applicant and its principals may not be currently suspended or debarred from doing business with the Federal Government, as indicated by the United States General Services Administration list of Parties Excluded from Federal Procurement and Non-Procurement Programs, the State of Texas, or the City of Austin.
- b. Applicants shall be able to meet the City's insurance requirements for social service contractors. See the insurance requirements in Section 0400 of the RFP.
- c. Applicant shall be able to obtain a Fiduciary Bond if a contract is awarded in the amount of the proposed application.
- d. Applicant's two most recent audit years:
  1. Shall reflect an unqualified opinion
  2. Shall not reflect a "Going Concern Uncertainty"
  3. Shall not reflect financial management issues unless Applicant can provide evidence that necessary changes have been implemented.
- e. Applicant's Board of Directors shall:
  1. Have specific terms delineated by a beginning and ending date
  2. Meet in person a minimum of three times per fiscal year
  3. Have a process to review program performance, approve budgets, review financial performance and approve audit reports.
- f. Within the last five years, the Applicant shall have a minimum of two years successful experience working with the proposed target populations and providing the proposed services to clients.

All Applicants must submit the following documents in a sealed envelope in the same package as their application:

- a. Completed Threshold Review Checklist (Section 0605)
- b. Current Board of Directors by-laws

- c. Approved Board of Directors minutes during the previous fiscal year reflecting the Board has a documented process that:
  - a. reviews program performance
  - b. approves budgets
  - c. reviews financial performance
  - d. approves audit reports
- d. Copy of the most recently filed 990 or 990 EZ, or Extension to File documentation (no older than FY 2012)
- e. A complete set of audited financial statements to include the auditor's opinion and any management letters, covering the two most recent audit years
- f. Completed Non-Suspension or Debarment Certification Form (Section 0805)
- g. Letter from a Surety Bond Agency certifying they will provide a Fiduciary Bond to the Applicant if a contract is awarded in the amount of the proposed application

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