

November 20, 2023

**Community Supports Partnerships Call for Proposals for Hub Pilots, October 2023  
Frequently Asked Questions – Advice for Applicants**

**GENERAL RFP QUESTIONS**

**Who is eligible to apply?**

Only Local Behavioral Health Authorities (LBHAs) as defined by Md. Code Ann., Health—Gen. §§ 10–1201(d)—10–1202 and Local Management Boards (LMBs) as defined by Md. Code Ann., Human Services § 8–301 are eligible to apply.

**How many Hub pilot grants will be awarded under this Call for Proposals (RFP)?**

The CHRC will award up to ten (10) Hub pilots to test the model before it is implemented statewide.

**Could more Hub Pilots be awarded under this RFP if funding is available?**

No. The CHRC will not award more than ten (10) during the pilot phase.

**When will award decisions be made?**

Award decisions are expected in February/March 2024.

**Is there a dollar limit for grant awards?**

The CHRC anticipates that the amount awarded for each Partnership Hub Pilot grant will be in the range of \$300,000 to \$500,000 over the 17-month period. Applicants may propose budgets exceeding this level if justification is provided.

**Can a proposal request more than \$500,000 if it would serve multiple jurisdictions, has a large student population, and/or anticipates a large number of service provider grants?**

Applicants may request more than \$500,000 in their proposals if justification can be provided. Applicants are encouraged to carefully consider the activities and deliverables of the Hub pilot program listed on page 10 of the RFP. The CHRC may ask applicants to reduce their budgets, revise their staffing plan, etc.

**Is the estimated award of \$300,000-500,000 per calendar year or per the 17 months of the grant period?**

Over the entire 17-month grant period.

**Is the estimated award of \$300,000-500,000 per Hub or per jurisdiction?**

It is an estimate per Hub Pilot, not per jurisdiction, though applicants may request more than \$500,000.

**What is the grant period?**

The grant project period will be approximately 17 months, from February 2024 to June 2025. Awards will span fiscal years 2024 and 2025. In February 2025, the CHRC anticipates that it will issue a Call for Proposals for full-fledged Community Supports Partnerships. Hub Pilots will be invited to apply with their prospective Spokes for Partnership grants under that Call for Proposals, and grants awarded under that RFP will be implemented starting in July 2025.

**Can a Hub Pilot have partners?**

Yes. The proposal should identify any partners that will provide substantive support to the project. One organization (an LMB or LBHA) should be designated as the lead. The proposal should present a clear

accountability or management plan that delineates the roles and responsibilities of each project partner. Partner budgets should be listed under “Contractual” and described in the budget narrative. For a collaborative grant, the lead grantee would receive funding disbursements from the CHRC, then distribute funds to its partners. Applicants should adhere to their standard procurement processes as applicable.

**Can a Hub Pilot propose to serve more than one County/jurisdiction?**

Yes, regional Hub Pilots may apply. A regional Hub Pilot could be proposed either by a single organization that currently serves multiple jurisdictions, or through a collaboration between two or more organizations that currently serve different jurisdictions. As above, regional Hub Pilot applicants must be LBHA(s) and/or LMB(s).

A regional proposal would be a single Partnership, with a single Hub, serving all jurisdictions. One LBHA or LMB would be the lead applicant. Clear roles must be identified for the other LBHAs, LMBs, and Local Education Agencies (LEAs) in each jurisdiction within the overall Hub/Partnership structure, such as serving on a steering committee. An organizational chart is recommended. These roles could be contractual or advisory, and all parties should provide letters of commitment.

**If applying as a regional hub for multiple counties, would an applicant be considered one Hub, but with Partnerships? Would it be one proposal or multiple proposals?**

It would be one Hub pilot, and one future Partnership. One proposal to be a regional Hub pilot would be submitted for this RFP. If selected to be a Hub pilot, there would be a single proposal submitted to become a future regional Community Support Partnership.

**Should the Hub focus on certain groups of students with higher needs?**

No, the Hub must serve all students within its area.

**Should proposed Hub staffing reflect the needs of the pilot period or full implementation?**

The CHRC recognizes that the Hub staffing needs for the pilot period may be different than for the full Partnership. Budgets under this RFP should reflect the activities and deliverables of the pilot listed on page 10 of the RFP. When Hub Pilots are preparing budgets for full Community Supports Partnerships in 2025, additional staffing resources may be requested.

**Should proposals build on existing structures such as advisory boards, or should entirely new structures be formed?**

Proposals may build on existing structures such as advisory boards.

**What happens if both the LBHA and LMB want to become the Hub?**

Hubs should reflect community consensus. Communities are encouraged to determine which agency should be in the lead and which agency should be a partner. All Hub proposals should include specific plans for ongoing collaboration between the LBHA, LMB, and LEA. In this RFP, clear community consensus will be required to select a single entity to serve as the Hub pilot. Lack of consensus, or competition, could result in the jurisdiction not being selected for this Hub pilot program.

**Does an organization need to have an MOU or cooperative agreement letter in place with the school system in order to apply?**

No, a letter of support is sufficient for the application. If an applicant already has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or cooperative agreement with the school system, it should be included in the application package.

**What will be the time requirement for training and technical assistance?**

Dedicated staff should be hired to satisfy the time investment to complete the activities and deliverables listed on page 10 of the RFP. The CHRC and National Center for School Mental Health will provide a robust training and technical assistance program and host a statewide community of practice. Grantees should expect to spend several hours per month in these meetings and trainings. Most activities will be online/virtual.

**The RFP includes a number of mandatory appendices including tables describing programs currently associated with the applicant. If the information in some of these tables is redundant, could they be consolidated?**

Yes. The purpose of these appendices is to demonstrate the number, breadth, and depth of programs with which the applicant currently interacts as a grantor, grantee, or other relationship. Tables should be clearly labeled in the appendix, and if they respond to more than one requirement, these should be noted.

The purpose of Appendix 2 is to demonstrate the range of the applicant's experience with behavioral health programs for young people. The purpose of Appendices 5 and 6 is to demonstrate the applicant's experience as a grantor and grantee respectively.

**How much information should be included in the tables in the appendices?**

Please keep information brief and factual. Program descriptions should be no more than a sentence or two. Basic information should include the focus of each program, the level and source of funding, the population served if applicable, and other information listed on page 13 of the RFP.

**How will award decisions be made?**

As stated on page 10 of the Call for Proposals, proposals will be evaluated based on: 1) experience coordinating a broad array of behavioral health services in schools, 2) experience as a fiduciary, 3) experience with data, and 4) collaboration and community consensus. Additional considerations will include: 1) geographic diversity, 2) diversity in organization type, 3) diversity in population density, 4) readiness to implement, and 5) staffing plan.

**If a jurisdiction is not awarded a Hub Pilot under this Call for Proposals, when will be the next opportunity to apply?**

The CHRC has not yet determined when the next RFP for Hubs will be issued, and will make a determination in the coming months.

**LETTER OF SUPPORT QUESTIONS**

**Is a letter of support from the Local Superintendent or the Superintendent's designee mandatory?**

Yes. A sample letter is provided in Appendix D.

**Does the letter of support need to be submitted with the grant application, or can it be provided at a later date?**

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Letters of support from the Superintendent/designee must be submitted with the grant application. Applications that do not have a letter of support from the Superintendent/designee will not be considered.

**Should applicants include a letter of support from the LMB or LBHA that is not applying?**

A letter of support from the agency that is not applying is optional. If provided, this letter should indicate that the applicant is the consensus choice for the area, and should discuss the roles of both the LBHA and LMB in the Hub.

**Should applicants include letters of support from service providers and/or other community organizations?**

Applicants may submit letters of support from other community organizations and service providers in order to demonstrate community consensus.

**QUESTIONS ABOUT SERVICE PROVIDER GRANTS AND FUTURE PARTNERSHIP GRANTS**

**Will a list of service providers awarded under the August 2023 Call for Proposals be available prior to submission of the Hub Pilot grant application?**

No, service provider grants will be awarded in January/February 2024, while Hub Pilot applications will be due at noon on December 13, 2023.

**How can a Hub apply without knowing who the service providers will be?**

Applicants are reminded that during this pilot phase, the CHRC will be responsible for grant monitoring associated with the service provider grants. Applicants are encouraged to review the list of activities and deliverables for Hub Pilots listed on page 10 of the RFP. The CHRC will post the list of applicants under the first Call for Proposals for service providers on our website.

**Will Hubs be required to work with all service providers awarded through the August 2023 Call for Proposals?**

Hubs awarded under this RFP will begin to work with service providers awarded under the August 2023 RFP during this grant period. When developing a future Partnership proposal in 2025, Hubs will be expected to include these service provider grantees unless the Hub has cause for not including them.

**Will Hub pilots be responsible for managing grants awarded by the CHRC under the August 2023 Call for Proposals for service providers?**

No. The CHRC and National Center for School Mental Health will be responsible for grant monitoring associated with the service provider grants. During the technical assistance program, Hubs and service providers will interact, but service providers will continue to report directly to the CHRC.

**If a jurisdiction is not awarded a Hub Pilot under this Call for Proposals, who will monitor service provider grants?**

The CHRC and National Center for School Mental Health will continue to monitor grants for service providers in areas of the state without Hubs.

**If a jurisdiction does not have a Hub identified by 2025, will service providers in that area awarded under the August 2023 RFP have an opportunity to apply for funding when their grants expire in June 2025?**

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Yes, the CHRC will provide a mechanism for service providers to apply for funding in 2025 regardless of the status of a Hub in their area.

**Will all Hub Pilots automatically become Partnership Hubs after the grant period?**

Hub Pilots will be welcome to apply to become Partnership Hubs in 2025, however, there will continue to be an application process. The pilot program is designed to help organizations prepare to become future Partnership Hubs. While significant technical assistance will be provided to Hub Pilots, failure to comply and perform could result in the organization not being ready to apply to become a future Community Support Partnership or not being favorably considered during the future grant application review process.

**Will entities that are not LBHAs or LMBs be eligible to apply to become Hubs in the future, after the pilot?**

The Consortium has not yet made a decision on this question.

**Can service providers apply under this grant? If not, when is the next funding opportunity for service providers?**

This grant opportunity is for Hub Pilots only. The Consortium and CHRC have not yet determined when the next service provider RFP will be issued.

**Does the CHRC have other funding opportunities for providers of behavioral health services?**

The CHRC currently has an open RFP for the Health Equity Resources Communities program. The CHRC also anticipates issuing its annual RFP in early 2024. More information is posted on the CHRC website and is distributed through the monthly CHRC newsletter.

**BUDGET AND PAYMENT SCHEDULE QUESTIONS**

**What are permissible uses of grant funding?**

Hub Pilot grant applicants should request grant funds to support a small number of permanent staff whose primary responsibility will be the Community Supports Partnership program. Hub Pilot responsibilities should not fall on existing staff that already have full time responsibilities. Permissible uses of funding under this RFP include: staff salaries and fringe, modest IT hardware and software, supplies, travel, contractual, expenses related to convening meetings, and indirect costs.

**Can applicants request funds for information technology such as data systems?**

Hub Pilot grant applicants may request funding for modest, one-time upgrades to IT systems in order to implement the pilot program. In future years, Hubs may be required to utilize a common platform; as such, requested investments in data systems during this pilot phase should be minimal.

**Can applicants request funding for incentives for meetings?**

Yes, proposals may include modest funding requests to provide incentives to community members to participate in meetings.

**Can lines be added to the Budget Spreadsheet Template?**

Yes, lines can be added to account for all parts of the applicant's budget.

**If an applicant's budget model does not fit the template provided, is it acceptable to use a different format rather than the spreadsheet template?**

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The CHRC Budget Spreadsheet template and Budget Narrative template must be used for each proposal submitted. These documents are available on the CHRC website.

**Should applicants name individuals in their budgets, or just use licenses/positions?**

Please use names for incumbent staff. For positions that will be hired, use the job title and license if applicable.

**Is there a budgetary limit to the amount of funding for contractors?**

Grantees may work with contractors to implement grant activities. There is no defined limit for the amount of a grantee's budget that may be used for contractors. The Budget Spreadsheet and Budget Narrative should clearly state and explain all contract costs. The application should include a letter of commitment or MOU between the applicant organization and any contractors.

**Will fringe costs exceeding 25% be considered?**

The Commission advises that the fringe rate be calculated at no more than 25%. If the grantee requests more than 25%, the applicant will be required to provide a compelling rationale for exceeding this amount. The Commission is willing to consider fringe requests above 25% on a case-by-case basis.

**Will the Commission accept rates for indirect costs that exceed 10%?**

In accordance with MD Code Ann., State Finance and Procurement § 2-208, the CHRC will allow for reimbursement of indirect costs to nonprofit organizations in an amount equal to the rate the nonprofit organization has negotiated and received for indirect costs under a direct federal award, or from a non-federal entity based on the cost principles in Subpart E of OMB Uniform Guidance.

**Can a local government agency request funding for indirect costs?**

Yes.

**Should the budget for indirect be included in the \$300,000 - \$500,000 range or in addition to that funding level?**

The indirect funding request should be considered as part of the total budget, not in addition to it.

**Should in-kind contributions by the applicant (e.g., equipment, staff) be included in the Budget Spreadsheet?**

No, however, these should be described in an applicant's proposal as they will demonstrate the organization's current capacity.

**Are expenses incurred prior to the execution of the grant agreement eligible for reimbursement under the grant?**

No. Expenses incurred by applicants prior to full execution of the grant agreement are not eligible for reimbursement. Grant agreements are expected to be executed in February/March 2024.

**Are these state or federal funds?**

State funds, from the Blueprint for Maryland's Future Fund.

**Will the CHRC reduce an applicant's budget?**

The CHRC may ask applicants to reduce their budgets, revise staffing plans, etc.

**How frequently will grantees receive payments?**

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An initial fund distribution will be made upon execution of the grant documents. The fund distribution schedule will be provided after awards are made.

**Will grantees be paid via check or electronic transfer?**

Grant funds will be distributed either electronically or via check. CHRC staff encourages all programs who are awarded grant funds through the Consortium to enroll in the Comptroller's ACH program in order to receive grant funds electronically. Enrollment forms may be found here: <https://www.marylandtaxes.gov/forms/state-accounting/static-files/GADX10Form.pdf>. Entities who are already receiving state funds electronically do not need to reenroll. Entities who do not elect to receive funds electronically may experience a delay in receiving funds via check.

**Will grantees need to request a budget modification for changes in personnel, i.e., staff turnover?**

So long as the position titles and salaries remain the same, grantees do not need to notify the CHRC of staffing changes. If a position remains vacant for more than four months, grantees should notify the CHRC, as this may impede the grantee's ability to implement the grant. Notification may occur through regular reporting requirements.

**APPLICATION SUBMISSION QUESTIONS**

**Can a proposal exceed the limit of 10 pages?**

Applicants are encouraged to be concise in their proposals. The narrative portion of the application should not exceed 10 pages, but the transmittal letter, table of contents, cover sheet, appendices, and supplemental information may exceed the page limit.

**Is it necessary to print a copy of the application cover sheet?**

Hub Pilot applicants are required to fill out a Smart Sheet that will serve as an electronic cover sheet. This cover sheet may be printed and scanned for the full application package. The URL for the SmartSheet is: <https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/ae0a4d72a774468a801e2cd25fd65193>

**Can applicants submit the two hard copies of the full proposal in person?**

Yes, applicants may submit the full proposal in person at 45 Calvert Street, Room 336, Annapolis, MD 21401. Individuals delivering proposals will need to sign in at the guard station and present a photo ID.

**Is there a preference for how hard copies are bound?**

We prefer comb bound or spiral bound. No binders, please.

**Is there a preferred font style, size, and/or spacing preferences?**

We prefer single spaced, in 11- or 12-point font.

**Should each part of the proposal be a separate electronic attachment?**

We prefer all parts of the proposal to be in a single PDF.

**Should the project proposal be organized in the order it is presented in the RFP or could it be reorganized?**

We prefer the order it is listed in the RFP, but applicants may change the order if they desire.

**What is the key deadline for an on-time proposal? Will late applications be accepted?**

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Electronic copies of full proposals MUST be emailed to [jen.clatterbuck@maryland.gov](mailto:jen.clatterbuck@maryland.gov) by 12:00 NOON on December 13. Applicants that do not submit electronic applications to [jen.clatterbuck@maryland.gov](mailto:jen.clatterbuck@maryland.gov) by 12:00 NOON on December 13 will not be accepted.