

Request for Consultant Bids

Background

The Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness ("Network") was created in 2009 as part of a statewide vision to promote collaboration and coordination in the effort to prevent and end homelessness. This Network was one of 10 funded across the Commonwealth for a 2 year pilot project. In the immediate years that followed, the Network continued with small private funding (United Way of Pioneer Valley, Community Foundation of Western MA and the Davis Foundation) and small Network partner contributions. Four years ago Network leaders successfully lobbied its Western MA legislators to create a budget earmark to fund the Network at \$125,000 each year to implement the Western MA Opening Doors Plan to End Homelessness, modeled after the federal plan.

In the last two fiscal years, due to budget constraints, the Governor cut or vetoed Network funding. This year, following the Governor's veto, the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) allocated funds from its budget line item to fund the Network at \$50,000 for the remainder of this fiscal year. The Network seeks a consultant to assist with planning for Network functions upon the anticipated end of public funding as of July 1, 2018.

The Network also offers an umbrella and connector to the two federally funded entities charged to end homelessness: the Hampden County Continuum of Care (CoC) and the Three County CoC, which includes Hampshire, Franklin and Berkshire Counties. The CoC's federally mandated requirements are the drivers of strategic planning and outcome measures for the region. Each CoC relies on the Network to meet certain criteria for its annual funding application to the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

The Network has gained a reputation statewide as an effective, outcome-oriented vehicle for collaboration and coordination across the four counties of Western Massachusetts. It is the only remaining fully active and independent Network across the state. It has a Leadership Council made up of roughly 60 leaders that includes in name elected officials, community college presidents, a few business leaders and providers across every non-profit sector from housing to child care to health care to workforce development. It has 5 fully functioning committees that meet monthly based on the sub-population or issue: families, individuals, veterans, youth and workforce development. Committee attendances ranges from 12 to 30 people (with mailing lists of several hundred) and includes roughly 120 people actively involved across the Network.

In addition to convening and facilitating the committee meetings, the Network determines its legislative priorities and coordinates advocacy meetings with Western MA legislators. The Network also sponsors large regional events such as a Homelessness Resource Fair for Providers or a Career Services Training Workshop for Providers.

The Network's Director of Regional Coordination, Pamela Schwartz, has served in this position since the Network's inception and has been the only part-time staff person for the last 7 years.

The Scope of Work:

The Network Leadership Council seeks a consultant to prepare the Network for its next phase, presumably without public or private funding. With the consultant's assistance, it seeks to answer the following questions:

- What is the Network value?
- What is the most appropriate collaborative model to best meet the goals to prevent and end homelessness?
- What do Network partners want to maintain, change, add?
- What is the most productive relationship between the CoC's and the Network and how best to manifest it?
- What can the Network partners do through volunteer commitment?
- What requires professional support to continue and what makes sense to let go?
- What is the role of community leaders not directly involved in homelessness work? How can the Network use their time well and create opportunities to contribute?
- What work is appropriate to do on a regional level vs. local level?

Skills needed:

The consultant must have experience:

- convening and facilitating large groups
- synthesizing multiple view points across a broad demographic that includes urban and rural populations
- planning group meetings with clear outcomes
- collating, analyzing and writing reports with clear recommendations

Request:

Please submit a maximum 2 page proposal summarizing your approach to this work. Please include:

- a work plan for achieving clear recommendations based on Network partner input
- a proposed timeline (note: tentative Network meetings for this purpose have been scheduled for Tues., Feb. 6, and Tues. Feb. 27)
- number of hours required and hourly rate
- 2 references

Submission:

Please submit your proposal and two references by 3 pm, December 15 to Pamela Schwartz, Director, at pschwartz77@gmail.com.