



Peer Bridger Services Technical Assistance Grant

Request for Proposals

Grant Procurements

(On-Line Submission Required)

Statewide Financial System (SFS) Identifier- MH253005

November 2025

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Peer Bridger Services Technical Assistance Grant RFP#MH253005 Applicant Checklist

Frequent Issues/Questions:

-Please begin working on your application in SFS **no later than 5 business days before the application due date** and **submit no later than 48 hours before the due date**. This will allow you time to troubleshoot any issues that arise that may prevent you from submitting. Exceptions will not be considered or made for an applicant who cannot complete their proposal/application by the due date and time of the RFP.

-All required forms/templates are available in the “Event Comments and Attachments” section of SFS. Please note that there are restrictions to the type, size and naming conventions of the files and attachments uploaded in SFS. For more information, please review the SFS Attachment Guide [here](#). Failure to comply with these guidelines may result in attachments not being viewable to reviewers.

-No workplan is required at this time, if awarded, a workplan will be developed during the contract development phase.

-The “Bid Amount” box is required to be filled out in SFS. Please enter the total amount of funding your organization is requesting from NYS OMH in this box.

-New York State reserves 5-10 business days from the receipt of complete Prequalification Applications to conduct its review. If supplementary information or updates are required, review times will be longer. Due to the length of time this process could take to complete, it is advised that nonprofits prequalify as soon as possible. Failure to successfully complete the prequalification process early enough will prohibit the submission of the application in SFS.

Please complete the following checklist prior to submission of your proposal. This checklist **SHOULD NOT** be submitted, it is for your use only.

Confirm the following:

- ☐ Your organization has met the eligibility requirements outlined in **Section 2.4 Eligible Agencies**
- ☐ Your organization is prequalified in SFS. SFS will prevent submission if your organization is a not-for-profit and not prequalified (see **Section 2.8 and 2.9 of the RFP document** for more information on Registration, Prequalification and Training Resources for SFS)
- ☐ Updates to the RFP can happen at any time, per **Section 2.6**, check the OMH website for any updates to the RFP posted by OMH.
- ☐ Provider Contact form completed and uploaded in SFS
- ☐ Sexual Harassment Prevention Certification Completed and uploaded in SFS
- ☐ Gender Based Violence and the Workplace Certification completed and uploaded in SFS.
- ☐ Proposal Template completed and any applicable attachments labeled with question numbers (example: question 6.2a calls for a sample assessment tool, the assessment tool should be labeled as 6.2a and added at the end of the Proposal Template)
- ☐ Proposal Template and attachments (except budget, see next checkbox) combined into one PDF and uploaded in SFS under Q1
- ☐ Budget Template Completed (left in Excel) and uploaded in SFS under Q2
- ☐ Application submitted in SFS prior to the due date and time listed in **Section 2.2 Key Events/Timeline** (OMH strongly advises that applicants do not wait until the last day/last few hours to complete and submit applications/proposals to Grant RFPs. Exceptions will not be considered or made for an applicant who cannot complete their proposal/application by the due date and time of the RFP.)

1. Introduction And Background

1.1 Purpose of the Request for Proposal

OMH is committed to the support of individuals in their transition from hospitalization to community, as a part of the overall continuum of care. The New York State Office of Mental Health is seeking proposals to contract with one (1) entity provide technical assistance to Article 28 facilities committed to supporting individuals transitioning from hospital to community through the provision of Peer Bridger services. The awardee will receive \$100,000 annually to provide support in the form of training, an ongoing learning collaborative, and guidance to each hospital on peer service best practices.

Peer support services are extremely effective at engaging and supporting individuals in forming and achieving their personalized wellness and recovery goals. In particular, Peer Bridger services are designed to accompany individuals who are being discharged from restrictive or institutional environments which may have impacted a person's ability to self-advocate, and, depending upon the length of stay in that setting, may have resulted in a loss of the skills necessary to establish themselves as fully participating and included members of their community of choice. It is intended to provide voluntary and mutual assistance built on a foundation of shared experience in navigating systems of care.

Bridger support is designed to offer support to individuals who are hospitalized in Article 28 settings. It can help them make decisions about discharge options that are being suggested by the inpatient team that best meet the recipient's individual needs and preferences and help them with choices that will support a successful return to the community. Peer Bridgers establish rapport and connection with an individual while hospitalized and continue to work with the recipient while they are in the community for approximately six months to one year. It is not care management nor a mechanism to force people to follow up with aftercare. Peer Bridging services can help individuals transition and navigate the difficulties that can occur as a person living with mental health experiences other intersecting challenges, provide suggestions and assist in exploring options and opportunities based on a shared lived experience paradigm, and offer support that is respectful of self-determination and encourages self-efficacy.

Bridgers can provide individualized skills training, systems navigation and advocacy support that is grounded in a "do with rather than do for" philosophy. While Peer Bridging services can reduce hospitalizations and cost to the system, its ultimate value lies in providing hope that individuals can live a life that provides meaning, purpose and extends past the limitations of deficit-focused intervention models. This funding opportunity is offered to Article 28 facilities to hire, train and support the use of Peer Bridgers in a manner that is consistent with the role as defined in this RFP and will provide bridging services to those in need.

Fidelity and adherence to the Peer Bridger model is essential to its success; therefore, it is crucial to develop a technical assistance entity to support individual programs. This funding will ensure that technical assistance on Peer Support best practices is offered to maximize the success of the program, provide in-discipline perspective and direction on the role and function of Peer Bridgers, provide guidance on the supervision of peer support workers that follow the

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values and principles of the practice of peer support, and collaborate with selected hospitals to ensure that individuals in care are able to live meaningful lives in the communities of their choosing.

Notice: Notification of intent to apply should be made to the Local Governmental Unit (county director of community services) for each county to be served under the program application, as defined in Section 41 of the New York State Mental Hygiene Law.

1.2 Target Population/Eligibility Criteria

The purpose of this funding and RFP is to develop a training and technical assistance entity to support the implementation, management, and ongoing support of Article 28 Peer Bridgers.

Peer Bridgers aim to support individuals being discharged from Article 28 inpatient facilities following a hospitalization as they return to the community. Individuals in these settings who may benefit from peer bridging should be preparing for discharge and agree to voluntarily participate. They may experience emotional distress or trauma responses, carry a diagnosis of mental illness or substance use, and have frequent encounters with the mental health system.

2. Proposal Submissions

2.1 Designated Contact/Issuing Officer

OMH has assigned an Issuing Officer for this project. The Issuing Officer or a designee shall be the sole point of contact regarding the RFP from the date of issuance of the RFP until the issuance of the Notice of Conditional Award. To avoid being deemed non-responsive, an applicant is restricted from making contact with any other personnel of OMH regarding the RFP. Certain findings of non-responsibility can result in rejection for a contract award. The Issuing Officer for this RFP is:

Amanda Szczepkowski
New York State Office of Mental Health
Contracts and Claims
44 Holland Avenue, 7th Floor
Albany, NY 12229
OMHLocalProcurement@omh.ny.gov

2.2 Key Events/Timeline

RFP Release Date	<u>11/06/2025</u>
Questions Due	<u>12/01/2025</u>
Questions and Answers Posted on Website	<u>12/22/2025</u>
Proposals Due by 2:00 PM EST*	<u>01/15/2026</u>
Anticipated Award Notification	<u>02/18/2026</u>
Anticipated Contract Start Date	<u>07/01/2026</u>

*OMH strongly advises that applicants do not wait until the last day/last few hours to complete and submit applications/proposals to Grant RFPs. Exceptions will not be

considered or made for an applicant who cannot complete their proposal/application by the due date and time of the RFP. **Please note that there are restrictions to the type, size and naming conventions of the files and attachments uploaded in SFS. For more information, please review the SFS Attachment Guide [here](#). Failure to comply with these guidelines may result in attachments not being viewable to reviewers.**

2.3 Disposition of Proposals

All proposals submitted by the due date and time become the property of OMH. Any proposals not received by the due date and time do not get reviewed and are excluded from consideration.

2.4 Eligible Agencies

Prequalification is required for all not-for-profit organizations seeking grant funding from New York State. Please see Section 2.8 and Section 2.9 for additional Prequalification Information.

Eligible applicants are organizations that currently operate training and technical assistance programs funded by the Office of Mental Health.

Please be advised that all questions regarding Eligibility will be responded to through the official posting of the Questions and Answers. No questions about Eligibility will be responded to either individually or prior to the posting of the Q&As.

2.5 RFP Questions and Clarifications

All questions or requests for clarification concerning the RFP shall be submitted in writing to the Issuing Officer by e-mail to OMHLocalProcurement@omh.ny.gov by the "Questions Due" date indicated in section 2.2 and will be limited to addressing only those questions submitted by the deadline. No questions can be submitted or will be answered after this date. No questions will be answered by telephone or in person. Please enter "Peer Bridger Services Technical Assistance Grant RFP" in the subject line of the email.

The questions and official answers will be posted on the OMH website by the date listed in the timeline section 2.2.

2.6 Addenda to Request for Proposals

In the event that it becomes necessary to revise any part of the RFP during the application submission period, an addendum will be posted on the OMH website and the NYS Contract Reporter.

It is the applicant's responsibility to periodically review the [OMH Procurement website](#) and the [NYS Contract Reporter](#) to learn of revisions or addendums to this RFP. No other notification will be given.

2.7 Disqualification Factors

Following the opening of bids, a preliminary review of all proposals will be conducted by the Issuing Officer or a designee to review each proposal's submission for completeness and verify that all eligibility criteria have been met. Additionally, during the proposal

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evaluation process, evaluators will also be reviewing eligibility criteria and confirming that they have been met. During the course of either of these review processes, proposals that do not meet basic participation standards will be disqualified, specifically:

- Proposals from applicants that do not meet the eligibility criteria as outlined in 2.4; or
- Proposals that do not comply with bid submission and/or required format instructions as specified in 2.9 or
- Proposals from eligible not-for-profit applicants who have not completed Vendor Prequalification, as described in 2.8, by 2:00 PM EST on the Proposal Due Date posted in section 2.2.

2.8 SFS Prequalification Requirement

Pursuant to the New York State Division of Budget Bulletin H-1032, dated June 7, 2013, New York State has instituted key reform initiatives to the grant contract process which require not-for-profits to be Prequalified in order for proposals to be evaluated and any resulting contracts executed.

Proposals received from eligible not-for-profit applicants who have not been Prequalified by the proposal due date of 2:00 PM EST on the Proposal Due Date posted in section 2.2 will not be able to submit their bid response through SFS.

Please do not delay in beginning and completing the prequalification process. The State reserves five (5) days to review submitted prequalification applications. Prequalification applications submitted to the State for review less than 5 days prior to the RFP due date and time may not be considered. Applicants should not assume their prequalification information will be reviewed if they do not adhere to this timeframe.

2.9 Vendor Registration, Prequalification and Training Resources for Not-for-Profits

NOTE: All applications must be submitted through the Statewide Financial System (SFS). No applications will be accepted electronically, US Postal Service, express mail delivery service or hand delivered.

For any application that does not contain all of the required documentation and/or “See Attached” responses that were to be uploaded, please be advised that the application will be reviewed and scored as submitted. For any incomplete response or missing and/or inappropriately submitted documentation, points will be deducted. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure, prior to submission, that the application is appropriate and complete. A workplan is not required for this RFP.

Each proposal submission through SFS is required to contain:

- Operating Budget (Appendix B)

All applicants must be registered with the New York State Statewide Financial System (SFS) and all Not-for-Profit agencies must be prequalified prior to

proposal submission.

Not-for-profit organizations must Register as a vendor with the Statewide Financial System and successfully Prequalify to be considered for an award.

This grant opportunity is being conducted as an SFS bid event. Not-for-profit vendors that are not prequalified can initiate and complete bid responses. However, not-for-profit vendors that are not prequalified will NOT be allowed to submit their bid response for consideration.

Information on [Registration](#) and [Prequalification](#) are available on the Grants Management Website. A high-level synopsis is provided below.

Registering as an SFS Vendor

To register an organization, send a complete [Grants Management Registration Form for Statewide Financial System \(SFS\) Vendors](#) and accompanying documentation where required by email to grantsmanagement@its.ny.gov. You will be provided with a Username and Password allowing you to access SFS.

Note: New York State Grants Management reserves 5-10 business days from the receipt of complete materials to process a registration request. Due to the length of time this process could take to complete, it is advised that new registrants send in their registration form as soon as possible. Failure to register early enough may prevent potential applicants from being able to complete a grant application on time.

If you have previously registered and do not know your Username, please contact the SFS Help Desk at (855) 233-8363 or at Helpdesk@sfs.ny.gov. If you do not know your Password, please click the [SFS Vendor Forgot Password](#) link from the main log in page and follow the prompts.

Prequalifying in SFS

- Log into the SFS Vendor Portal.
- Click on the Grants Management tile.
- Click on the Prequalification Application tile. The Prequalification Welcome Page is displayed. Review the instructions and basic information provided onscreen.

Note - If either of the above referenced tiles are not viewable, you may be experiencing a role issue. Contact your organization's Delegated Administrator and request the Prequalification Processor role.

- Select the Initiate a Prequalification Application radio button and click the Next button to begin the process. Starting with Organization Information, move through the steps listed on the left side of the screen to upload Required Documents, provide Contacts and Submit your Prequalification Application.

Note - If the Initiate a Prequalification Application radio button is not available, your organization may have already started a prequalification application and could even be prequalified. Click on the Version History Link to review your

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organization's prequalification status. If you are not currently prequalified, or your prequalification expires prior to the due date of this RFA, you will need to choose Collaborate on or Update your application.

- System generated email notifications will be sent to the contact(s) listed in the Contacts section when the prequalification application is Submitted, Approved, or returned by the State for more information. If additional information is requested, be certain to respond timely and resubmit your application accordingly.

Note: New York State reserves 5 business days from the receipt of complete Prequalification applications to conduct its review. If supplementary information or updates are required, review times will be longer. Due to the length of time this process could take to complete, it is advised that nonprofits Prequalify as soon as possible. Failure to successfully complete the Prequalification process early enough will prohibit the submission of the application in SFS.

Final Submission Format

Please note that all responses/applications/submissions to this RFP **must** be submitted through the Statewide Financial System (SFS). No mailed, delivered or emailed submissions will be accepted. OMH strongly recommends that applicants plan accordingly and allow themselves enough time to appropriately complete and submit by the due date and time of this RFP.

When providing uploads in response to any of the questions posed (other than the Fiscal/Budget component), please upload only PDF versions of those documents. When saving these files before uploading, with the exception of an underscore, please do not use any special characters in the file name, letters only should be used. All attachments required with the proposal must be combined into the proposal template PDF and clearly labeled. Uploading documents that are not in PDF form (other than the budget, which must be uploaded as an excel document) will result in the disqualification of the application.

Specific questions about SFS should be referred to the SFS Help Desk at helpdesk@sfs.ny.gov.

On Demand Grantee Training Material

A recorded session with information about the transition to SFS is available for Grantees on the Grants Management website - <https://grantsmanagement.ny.gov/> and in SFS Coach.

The following training material focused on grants management functionality is currently available in SFS Coach:

- An SFS Vendor Portal Reference Guide (https://upk.sfs.ny.gov/UPK/VEN101/FILES/SFS_Vendor_Portal_Access_Reference_Guide.pdf) to help Grantees understand which Grants Management roles they need in the SFS Vendor Portal based on the work they are currently involved in.

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- A Grantee Handbook (upk.sfs.ny.gov/UPK/VEN101/FILES/Grantee_User_Manual.pdf), which provides screenshots and step-by-step guidance on how to complete Grants Management-related tasks in SFS
 - On-demand recorded training videos focused on each aspect of the Grants Management business process
- Agencies can view vendor training material in SFS Coach by selecting **SFS Training for Vendors** from the Topic drop-down list.

3. Administrative Information

3.1 Reserved Rights

OMH reserves the right to:

- Reject any or all proposals received in response to the RFP that are deemed non-responsive or do not meet the minimum requirements or are determined to be otherwise unacceptable, in the agency's sole discretion;
- Withdraw the RFP at any time, at the agency's sole discretion
- Make an award under the RFP in whole or in part;
- Disqualify any applicant, and rescind any conditional award or contract made to such applicant whose conduct as a provider does not meet applicable standards as determined solely by OMH and/or proposal fails to conform to the requirements of the RFP;
- Seek clarifications and revisions of proposals for the purposes of assuring a full understanding of the responsiveness to this solicitation's requirements;
- Use proposal information obtained through the state's investigation of an applicant's qualifications, experience, ability or financial standing, and any material or information submitted by the applicant in response to the agency's request for clarifying information in the course of evaluation and/or selection under the RFP;
- Prior to the bid opening, direct applicants to submit proposal modifications addressing subsequent RFP amendments;
- Prior to the bid opening, amend the RFP specifications to correct errors or oversight, supply additional information, or extend any of the scheduled dates or requirements and provide notification to potential bidders via the OMH website, SFS and the New York State (NYS) Contract Reporter;
- Eliminate any non-material specifications that cannot be complied with by all of the prospective applicants;
- Waive any requirements that are not material;
- Negotiate any aspect of the proposal with the successful applicant in order to

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ensure that the final agreement meets OMH objectives and is in the best interests of the State;

- Conduct contract negotiations with the next responsible applicant, should the agency be unsuccessful in negotiating with the selected applicant;
- Require clarification at any time during the procurement process and/or require correction of arithmetic or other apparent errors for the purpose of assuring a full and complete understanding of an applicant's proposal and/or to determine an applicant's compliance with the requirements of the solicitation;
- Cancel or modify contracts due to insufficiency of appropriations, cause, convenience, mutual consent, non-responsibility, or a "force majeure";
- Change any of the scheduled dates stated in the RFP.

3.2 Debriefing

OMH will issue award and non-award notifications to all applicants. Non-awarded applicants may request a debriefing, in writing, requesting feedback on their own proposal, within 15 calendar days of the OMH dated letter. OMH will not offer debriefing to providers who receive an award. OMH will not offer ranking, statistical, or cost information of other proposals until after the NYS Office of the State Comptroller has approved all awards under this RFP. Written debriefing requests may be sent to the Designated Contact, as defined in Section 2.1.

3.3 Protests Related to the Solicitation Process

Protests based on errors or omissions in the solicitation process, which are or should have been apparent prior to the deadline for receipt of all written questions for this RFP, must be filed prior to the deadline for questions. In the event an applicant files a timely protest based on error or omission in the solicitation process, the Commissioner of OMH or their designee will review such protest and may, as appropriate, issue a written response or addendum to the RFP to be posted on the OMH website in the RFP section. Protests of an award decision must be filed within fifteen (15) business days after the notice of conditional award or five (5) business days from the date of the debriefing. The Commissioner or their designee will review the matter and issue a written decision within twenty (20) business days of receipt of protest.

All protests must be in writing and must clearly and fully state the legal and factual grounds for the protest and include all relevant documentation. The written documentation should clearly state reference to the RFP title and due date. Such protests must be submitted to:

New York State Office of Mental Health
Commissioner Ann Marie T. Sullivan, M.D.
44 Holland Ave
Albany, NY 12229

3.4 Term of Contracts

The contracts awarded in response to this RFP will be for a five-year term. OMH reserves the right to modify the first period of the contract to coincide with the applicable fiscal period. For New York City contracts, the fiscal period is July 1 through June 30 of each year. Selected applicants awarded a contract under this RFP will be required to adhere to all terms and conditions in OMH's Contract for Grants.

3.5 Minority and Women Owned Business Enterprises

OMH recognizes its obligation to promote opportunities for maximum feasible participation of certified minority and women-owned business enterprises (MWBEs) and the employment of minority group members and women in the performance of OMH contracts. In accordance with New York State Executive Law Article 15-A, OMH hereby establishes a 16% goal for Minority-owned Business Enterprise (MBE) participation, a 14% goal for Women-owned Business Enterprise (WBE) participation, based on the current availability of qualified MWBEs, on any award resulting from this solicitation in excess of \$25,000 for commodities and services or \$100,000 for construction.

With respect to MWBEs, each award recipient must document its good faith efforts to provide meaningful opportunities for participation by MWBEs as subcontractors and suppliers in the performance of the project to be described in each grant disbursement agreement and must agree that OMH may withhold payment pending receipt of the required MWBE documentation. The directory of MWBEs can be viewed at <https://ny.newnycontracts.com>. For guidance on how OMH will determine a contractor's "good faith efforts", refer to 5 NYCRR §142.8.

In accordance with 5 NYCRR § 142.13, each award recipient acknowledges that if it is found to have willfully and intentionally failed to comply with the MWBE participation goals set forth herein and in its grant disbursement agreements, such finding constitutes a breach of contract and OMH may withhold payment from the award recipient as liquidated damages.

Such liquidated damages shall be calculated as an amount equaling the difference between: (1) all sums identified for payment to MWBEs had the award recipient achieved the contractual MWBE goals; and (2) all sums paid to MWBEs for work performed or material supplied under the grant disbursement agreement.

By applying, an Applicant agrees to demonstrate its good faith efforts to achieve its goals for the utilization of MWBEs by submitting evidence thereof in such form as OMH shall require. Additionally, an Applicant may be required to submit the following documents and information as evidence of compliance with the foregoing:

A. An MWBE Utilization Plan, which shall be submitted in conjunction with the execution of the grant disbursement agreement except as otherwise authorized by OMH. Any modifications or changes to the MWBE Utilization Plan after the execution of the

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grant disbursement agreement must be reported on a revised MWBE Utilization Plan and submitted to OMH.

OMH will review the submitted MWBE Utilization Plan and advise the award recipient of OMH acceptance or issue a notice of deficiency within 30 days of receipt.

B. If a notice of deficiency is issued, the award recipient will be required to respond to the notice of deficiency within seven (7) business days of receipt by submitting to OMH, a written remedy in response to the notice of deficiency. If the written remedy that is submitted is not timely or is found by OMH to be inadequate, OMH shall notify the award recipient and direct the award recipient to submit within five (5) business days, a request for a partial or total waiver of MWBE participation goals. Failure to file the waiver form in a timely manner may be grounds for disqualification of the bid or proposal.

OMH may refuse to enter into a grant disbursement agreement, or terminate an existing grant disbursement agreement resulting from this solicitation, under the following circumstances:

- a. If an award recipient fails to submit a MWBE Utilization Plan;
- b. If an award recipient fails to submit a written remedy to a notice of deficiency;
- c. If an award recipient fails to submit a request for waiver; or,
- d. If OMH determines that the award recipient has failed to document good faith efforts

The award recipient will be required to attempt to utilize, in good faith, any MBE or WBE identified within its MWBE Utilization Plan, during the performance of the project.

Requests for a partial or total waiver of established goal requirements may be made at any time during the term of the project but must be made no later than prior to the submission of a request for final payment under the grant disbursement agreement.

Each award recipient will be required to submit a Quarterly MWBE Contractor Compliance & Payment Report to OMH over the term of the project, in such form and at such time as OMH shall require, documenting the progress made toward achievement of the MWBE goals established for the project.

3.6 Participation Opportunities for New York State Certified Service-Disabled Veteran Owned Business

Article 17-B of the New York State Executive Law provides for more meaningful participation in public procurement by certified Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business (SDVOB), thereby further integrating such businesses into New York State's economy. OMH recognizes the need to promote the employment of service-disabled veterans and to ensure that certified service-disabled veteran-owned businesses have opportunities for maximum feasible participation in the performance of OMH contracts.

In recognition of the service and sacrifices made by service-disabled veterans and in

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recognition of their economic activity in doing business in New York State, applicants are expected to consider SDVOBs in the fulfillment of the requirements of the Contract. Such participation may be as subcontractors or suppliers, as proteges, or in other partnering or supporting roles.

OMH hereby establishes an overall goal of 6% for SDVOB participation, based on the current availability of qualified SDVOBs. For purposes of providing meaningful participation by SDVOBs, the Applicant/Contractor would reference the directory of New York State Certified SDVOBs found at <https://ogs.ny.gov/Veterans>. Additionally, following any resulting Contract execution, Contractor would be encouraged to contact the Office of General Services' Division of Service-Disabled Veterans' Business Development to discuss additional methods of maximizing participation by SDVOBs on the Contract.

It would be required that "good faith efforts" to provide meaningful participation by SDVOBs as subcontractors or suppliers in the performance of a resulting awarded Contract as documented.

3.7 Equal Opportunity Employment

By submission of a bid or proposal in response to this solicitation, the Applicant/Contractor agrees with all terms and conditions of Contract for Grants, Section IV(J) – Standard Clauses for All New York State Contracts including Clause 12 – Equal Employment Opportunities for Minorities and Women. The Contractor is required to ensure that it and any subcontractors awarded a subcontract over \$25,000 for the construction, demolition, replacement, major repair, renovation, planning or design of real property and improvements thereon (the "Work"), except where the Work is for the beneficial use of the Contractor, undertake or continue programs to ensure that minority group members and women are afforded equal employment opportunities without discrimination because of race, creed, color, national origin, sex, age, disability or marital status. For these purposes, equal opportunity shall apply in the areas of recruitment, employment, job assignment, promotion, upgrading, demotion, transfer, layoff, termination, and rates of pay or other forms of compensation. This requirement does not apply to (i) work, goods, or services unrelated to the Contract; or (ii) employment outside New York State.

The Applicant will be required to submit a Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprises and Equal Opportunity Policy Statement, to the State Contracting Agency with their bid or proposal. To ensure compliance with this Section, the Applicant will be required to submit with the bid or proposal an Equal Opportunity Staffing Plan (Form # to be supplied during contracting process) identifying the anticipated work force to be utilized on the Contract. If awarded a Contract, Contractor shall submit a Workforce Utilization Report, in such format as shall be required by the Contracting State Agency on a monthly or quarterly basis during the term of the contract. Further, pursuant to Article 15 of the Executive Law (the "Human Rights Law"), all other State and Federal

statutory and constitutional and non-discrimination provisions, the Contractor and sub-contractors will not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment status because of race, creed (religion), color, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, military status, age, disability, predisposing genetic characteristic, marital status, or domestic violence victim status, and shall also follow the requirements of the Human Rights Law with regard to non-discrimination on the basis of prior criminal conviction and prior arrest. Please Note: Failure to comply with the foregoing requirements may result in a finding of non-responsiveness, non-responsibility and/or a breach of the Contract, leading to the withholding of funds, suspension or termination of the Contract or such other actions or enforcement proceedings as allowed by the Contract.

3.8 Sexual Harassment Prevention Certification

State Finance Law §139-l requires applicants on state procurements to certify that they have a written policy addressing sexual harassment prevention in the workplace and provide annual sexual harassment training (that meets the Department of Labor's model policy and training standards) to all its employees. Bids that do not contain the certification may not be considered for award; provided however, that if the applicant cannot make the certification, the applicant may provide a statement with their bid detailing the reasons why the certification cannot be made. A template certification document is being provided as part of this RFP. Applicants must complete and return the certification with their bid or provide a statement detailing why the certification cannot be made.

3.9 Gender-Based Violence and the Workplace Certification

State Finance Law §139-m requires all vendors bidding on state contracts to implement and attest to a Gender-Based Violence and the Workplace policy. Applicants on state procurements must certify that they have a written policy addressing gender-based violence and the workplace that meets the minimum requirements of State Finance Law §139-m. Bids that do not contain the certification may not be considered for award; provided however, that if the applicant cannot make the certification, the applicant may provide a statement with their bid detailing the reasons why the certification cannot be made. A template certification document is being provided as part of this RFP.

Applicants must complete and return the certification with their bid or provide a statement detailing why the certification cannot be made.

3.10 Bid Response

Neither the State of New York or OMH shall be responsible for the costs or expenses incurred by the applicant in preparation or presentation of the bid proposal.

3.11 Acceptance of Terms and Conditions

A bid, in order to be responsive to this solicitation, must satisfy the specifications set forth in this RFP. A detailed description of this format and content requirements is presented in Section 2.9 of this RFP.

3.12 Freedom of Information Requirements

All proposals submitted for OMH's consideration will be held in confidence. However, the resulting contract is subject to New York State Freedom of Information Law (FOIL).

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Therefore, if an applicant believes that any information in its bid constitutes a trade secret or should otherwise be treated as confidential and wishes such information not be disclosed if requested, pursuant to FOIL (Article 6 of Public Officer's Law), the applicant must submit with its bid, a separate letter specifically identifying the page number(s), line(s), or other appropriate designation(s) containing such information explaining in detail why such information is a trade secret and formally requesting that such information be kept confidential. Failure by an applicant to submit such a letter with its bid identifying trade secrets will constitute a waiver by the applicant of any rights it may have under Section 89(5) of the Public Officers Law relating to the protection of trade secrets. The proprietary nature of the information designated confidential by the applicant may be subject to disclosure if ordered by a court of competent jurisdiction. A request that an entire bid be kept confidential is not advisable since a bid cannot reasonably consist of all data subject to a FOIL proprietary status.

3.13 NYS and OMH Policies

The applicant/contractor must agree to comply with all applicable New York State and OMH policies, procedures, regulations and directives throughout the Term of the contract.

4. Evaluation Factors and Awards

4.1 Evaluation Criteria

All proposals will be rated and ranked in order of highest score based on an evaluation of each applicant's written submission. **Please note that there are restrictions to the type, size and naming conventions of the files and attachments uploaded in SFS. For more information, please review the SFS Attachment Guide [here](#). Failure to comply with these guidelines may result in attachments not being viewable to reviewers.**

The Evaluation will apply points in the following categories as defined in Section 6:

Technical Evaluation	Points
6.1 Population	10
6.2 Description of Program	15
6.3 Implementation	35
6.4 Agency Performance, Reporting and Quality Improvement	10
6.5 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and Peer Support Language	10
6.6 Financial Assessment	20
Total Proposal Points	100 Points

For a detailed description of evaluation criteria for the Technical Evaluation and the Financial Assessment components, see Section 6 (Proposal Narrative).

4.2 Method for Evaluating Proposals

Designated staff will review each proposal for completeness and verify that all eligibility criteria are met. A complete proposal shall include all required components as described in Section 2.9. If a proposal is not complete or does not meet the basic eligibility and participation standards as outlined in Section 2.4, the proposal will be eliminated from further review. The agency will be notified of the rejection of its proposal within 10 working days of the proposal due date.

Proposals will be conducted in two parts: Technical Evaluation and Financial Assessment. The technical evaluation committee, consisting of at least three evaluators, will review the technical portion of each proposal and compute a technical score. A financial score will be computed separately based on the operating budget and budget narrative submitted.

Evaluators of the Technical Evaluation component may then meet to discuss the basis of those ratings. Following the discussion, evaluators may independently revise their original score in any section. Once completed, final Technical Evaluation scores will then be recalculated, averaged, and applied to the final Financial Assessment score to arrive at final scores.

Any proposal not receiving a minimum score of 70 will be eliminated from consideration.

In case of a tie in the scoring process, the proposal with the highest score on the Implementation and Agency Performance section (Section 6.2) of the Proposal Narrative will be ranked higher.

4.3 Process for Awarding Contracts

4.3.1 Initial Awards and Allocations

Proposals will be ranked, and one award will be made, one to the applicant with the highest score to assume the operation of the Peer Bridger Technical Assistance grant.

4.4 Contract Termination and Reassignment

There are a number of factors that may result in the contract being reassigned. This includes but is not limited to failure to meet start-up milestones, excluding referrals based on criminal or substance abuse history, or poor performance outcomes. A contractor will be provided notification if there is need for reassignment.

To reassign the contract, OMH will go to the next highest ranked proposal. If there are no agencies left with a passing score, OMH will go to the top of the list and work its way down the list to reassign the contract.

4.5 Award Notification

At the conclusion of the procurement, notification will be sent to successful and non-successful applicants. All awards are subject to approval by the NYS Attorney General and the Office of the State Comptroller before an operating contract can be finalized.

5. Scope of Work

5.1 Introduction

Peer Bridger programs are designed to offer support to individuals who are hospitalized in Article 28 settings, preparing for discharge, and who would benefit from support returning to the community. Peer Bridgers engage individuals into life, not only services, for a holistic approach to supporting individuals through the recovery process. Peer Bridgers establish rapport and connection with an individual while hospitalized and continuing into the community for periods of approximately six months up to one year. It is not intended to function as care management or a mechanism to ensure that people follow up with aftercare. Peer Bridging services can help individuals transition and navigate the difficulties that can occur as a person living with mental health and other intersecting challenges, provide suggestions and assist in exploring options and opportunities based on a shared lived experience paradigm. Peer Bridgers offer support that is respectful of self-determination and encourages self-efficacy.

Bridgers can provide individualized skills training, systems navigation and advocacy support that is grounded in a “do with rather than do for” philosophy. While Peer Bridging services can support reduced hospitalizations and cost to the system, its ultimate value lies in a strengths-based, person first approach that fosters hope that individuals can live a life that provides meaning and purpose. This funding opportunity is offered to training and technical assistance entities to provide essential technical support and guidance to Article 28 facilities implementing the Peer Bridger program.

This training entity shall be knowledgeable about peer specialist best practices, including for scenarios relating to crisis intervention, active listening, and other empathy skills. They should be knowledgeable about practical skills that will support Peer Bridgers to be successful in the role, including by developing relationships with communities to support individuals discharging from Article 28 facilities and promote community inclusion, participation, and engagement. Also essential is the provision of in-discipline support and guidance for supervision.

5.2 Objectives and Responsibilities

The awarded entity will be expected to meet the objectives and responsibilities below. These will form the basis for the scope of work and contract deliverables when an award is made.

Vendors must collaborate with the OMH Office of Advocacy and Peer Support Services and identified entities to ensure their program meets standards of best practice. This includes but is not limited to the following:

- Training
 - All trainings should align with the values and principles of mutual support, including trauma-informed and responsive approaches that are person-first, culturally curious and fundamentally anti-oppressive.
 - Specialized training for Peer Bridgers on best practices in mental health support, including crisis intervention, active listening, and empathy skills.
 - Workshops on understanding mental health conditions, recovery-oriented

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practices, and the integration of peer support into clinical settings.

- Opportunities for Article 28 facilities to learn how to effectively implement Peer Bridger roles.
- Training on the role of Psychiatric Advanced Directives (PADS) and Wellness Recovery Action Plans (WRAP) or similar.
- Ongoing professional development sessions to keep Peer Bridgers informed about emerging best practices, research, and innovations in the field.
- Access to webinars, conferences, and other educational events related to mental health peer support.
- **Community Engagement**
 - Support for Peer Bridgers in connecting with community resources, including support groups, educational programs, and advocacy organizations.
 - Teach Asset-Based Community Development principles so that Bridgers can better understand their communities. These principles will foster ongoing connection and engagement with resources that will support those who participate in the Bridger program.
 - Promotion of community awareness about the role and significance of Peer Bridgers in mental health care.
- **Resource Development**
 - Creation of accessible materials, such as manuals, guidelines, and toolkits specifically designed for peer Bridgers in mental health settings.
- **Supervision and Support**
 - Establishment of a mentorship or supervision structure that provides ongoing support for peer Bridgers.
 - Regular meetings with the Article 28 facilities implementing the Peer Bridger program to coach on supervisory best practices, including with an in-discipline lens.
 - Facilitation of a Learning Collaborative for Peer Bridgers to share experiences, and address challenges encountered in the field.
- **Collaboration with OAPSS and other entities including but not limited to:**
 - Other training partners to promote existing trainings, particularly around crisis intervention strategies
 - Article 28 hospitals implementing the Peer Bridger program to promote peer specialist integration into multidisciplinary teams and otherwise providing role clarity.
 - OAPSS on the implementation and management of all aspects of this funding

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- Evaluation and Feedback Mechanisms:
 - Feedback loops that allow peer Bridgers to share insights on their experiences and suggest improvements to the program, in the Learning Collaborative and through other forums.

By providing these comprehensive support services, a training entity can effectively enhance the capabilities of Peer Bridgers and the overall mental health care delivered in Article 28 hospitals.

5.3 Operating Funding

One award will be made in the amount of \$100,000 a year for 5 years for a total of \$500,000.

The amount prescribed allows for the development and implementation of a training and technical assistance entity for Article 28 hospitals implementing Bridger programs as well as support for Bridgers in these settings as outlined in this RFP.

Applicants are reminded that funding to support the operation of this program is contingent upon the continued availability of State appropriations.

6. Proposal Narrative

Please note that there are restrictions to the type, size and naming conventions of the files and attachments uploaded in SFS. For more information, please review the SFS Attachment Guide [here](#). Failure to comply with these guidelines may result in attachments not being viewable to reviewers.

A proposal template is provided in the “Event Comments and Attachments” section of SFS and MUST be used to answer the following questions. Any supporting attachments MUST be included in the upload of the proposal template as one continuous PDF document AND be labeled specific to the question number it is associated with. **Proposals/applications not submitted as described (other than the budget which must be uploaded in excel format) will result in disqualification of the application.**

When submitting proposals for funding under this RFP, the narrative must address all components listed below, in the following order:

6.1 Population

Services are to Article 28 hospitals implementing Peer Bridger services offered by a qualified peer support staff.

- a. Describe in narrative the characteristics of Article 28 facilities and the population to be served by the Peer Bridger program, including an understanding of all potential stressors one may be facing that lead to an admission.
- b. Describe your understanding of the needs of the Bridger program’s target population, emphasizing those who may have limited support networks/resources.

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- c. Describe approaches and/or best practice in engaging and supporting the target population. Response should demonstrate fidelity to the values and principles of peer support.
- d. Describe approaches and/or best practices in engaging Article 28 facilities and clinical providers. Response should include how to integrate peer support best practices into a multidisciplinary team that is historically clinical in nature.
- e. Describe your network, internally and externally, of behavioral health and other providers, and how you plan to utilize those networks to facilitate rapid access to care.

6.2 Description of Program

- a. Describe your agencies expertise in training. Ensure your response details how you will meet the following:
 - i. Trainings should align with the values and principles of mutual support, including trauma-informed and responsive approaches that are person-first, culturally curious and fundamentally anti-oppressive
 - ii. Understanding and application of peer support values, principles, and practices beyond the understanding of an ability to provide recovery-focused and strengths-based services.
 - iii. Specialized training for Peer Bridgers on best practices in mental health support, including crisis intervention, active listening, and empathy skills.
 - iv. Workshops on understanding recovery-oriented practices, and the integration of mental health peer support into clinical settings.
 - v. Training on the role of Psychiatric Advanced Directives (PADS) and Wellness Recovery Action Plans (WRAP) or similar.
 - vi. Ongoing professional development sessions
- b. Describe your agency's experience with community engagement. Include how your agency has connected with and built on existing community resources utilizing an Asset-based community development lens, including support groups, educational programs, natural support networks, clinical support networks, and any other relevant details.
- c. Detail your agency's experience with resource development. Ensure your response details the creation of accessible materials, such as manuals, guidelines, and toolkits specifically designed for peer Bridgers in mental health settings.
- a. Detail your agency's experience with supervision and support, including any mentorship opportunities, facilitation of a learning collaborative, and use of subject matter experts.
- d. Detail your agency's experience with evaluation and feedback mechanisms.

6.3 Implementation

- a. Provide a realistic timeline for the project, including key activities and responsible staff.
- b. Describe start-up and phase-in activities necessary to implement the Peer Bridger Training and Technical Assistance initiative. Include timeframes and accountable parties.
- c. Describe your plans to develop training for this initiative. Ensure your response details how you will meet the following:
 - i. All trainings should align with the values and principles of mutual support, including trauma-informed and responsive approaches that are person-first, culturally curious and fundamentally anti-oppressive
 - ii. understanding and application of peer support values, principles, and practices beyond the understanding of an ability to provide recovery-focused and strengths-based services.
 - iii. Specialized training for Peer Bridgers on best practices in mental health support, including crisis intervention, active listening, and empathy skills.
 - iv. Workshops on understanding recovery-oriented practices, and the integration of mental health peer support into clinical settings.
 - v. Opportunities for Article 28 facilities to learn how to effectively implement Peer Bridger roles.
 - vi. Training on the role of Psychiatric Advanced Directives (PADS) and Wellness Recovery Action Plans (WRAP) or similar.
 - vii. Ongoing professional development sessions to keep Peer Bridgers informed about emerging best practices, research, and innovations in the field.
 - viii. Access to webinars, conferences, and other educational events related to mental health peer support.
- d. Describe your plans to implement principles of community engagement. Ensure the following points are detailed:
 - i. Support for Peer Bridgers in connecting with community resources that are non-mental health related, including grass-roots supportive spaces, educational programs, advocacy organizations, and other local community assets.
 - ii. Teach Asset-Based Community Development principles so that Bridgers can better understand their communities. These principles will foster ongoing connection and engagement with resources that will support those who participate in the Bridger program.
 - iii. Promotion of community awareness about the role and significance of Peer Bridgers in mental health care.

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- iv. Utilization of participant feedback
- e. Detail your agency's plans to develop resources. Include how you will create accessible materials, such as manuals, guidelines, and toolkits specifically designed for peer Bridgers in mental health settings.
- f. Detail your agency's plans for supervision and support related to this initiative. Ensure your response encompasses the following:
 - i. Establishment of a mentorship or supervision structure that provides ongoing support for peer Bridgers.
 - ii. Regular meetings with the Article 28 facilities implementing the Peer Bridger program to coach on supervisory best practices, including with an in-discipline lens.
 - iii. Facilitation of a Learning Collaborative for Peer Bridgers to share experiences, and address challenges encountered in the field.
 - iv. Hiring and contracting with Subject Matter Experts relating to Peer Support Services.
- g. Detail how your agency will collaborate with OAPSS and other entities including but not limited to:
 - i. Other training partners to promote existing trainings, particularly around crisis intervention strategies
 - ii. Article 28 hospitals implementing the Peer Bridger program to promote peer specialist integration into multidisciplinary teams and otherwise providing role clarity.
 - iii. Providers of mental health, substance use, medical, and other services.
 - iv. OAPSS on the implementation and management of all aspects of this funding
- h. Detail how your agency will develop, implement, and maintain evaluation and feedback mechanisms. Include the following:
 - i. Feedback loops that allow peer Bridgers to share insights on their experiences and suggest improvements to the program, in the Learning Collaborative and through other forums.
 - ii. Specific outcomes relating to your experience supporting the use of Peer Bridgers in clinical settings.

6.4 Agency Performance, Reporting, and Quality Improvement

- a. To objectively measure the impact of the Peer Bridger technical assistance initiative, the awardee must demonstrate willingness and ability to work with OMH to support and participate in oversight, training and support of the model. Applicants should describe their experience designing and developing tools, forms, data elements and data collection processes. In addition, provide examples evaluation activities aimed at determining Program and training outcomes.

6.5 Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Recipient Input

This section describes the commitment of the entity to advancing equity. OMH is committed to the reduction of disparities in access, quality, and treatment outcomes for historically marginalized populations as well as centering and elevating the voice of individuals with lived experience throughout the system.

Commitment to Equity and the Reduction of Disparities in Access, Quality and Treatment Outcomes for Marginalized Populations

- a. Provide a mission statement for this project that includes information about the intent to serve individuals from marginalized/underserved populations in a culturally responsive trauma-informed way.
- b. Identify the management-level person responsible for coordinating/leading efforts to reduce disparities in access, quality, and treatment outcomes for marginalized populations.
- c. Identify the management-level person responsible for coordinating/leading efforts to ensure incorporation of feedback from participants in services in continuous agency improvement. Information provided should include the individual's title, organizational positioning and their planned activities for coordinating these efforts).
- d. Provide the diversity, inclusion, equity, cultural and linguistic competence plan for this program (as outlined in the National CLAS Standards). The plan should include information in the following domains:
 - i. Workforce diversity (data-informed recruitment)
 - ii. Workforce inclusion
 - iii. Reducing disparities in access quality, and treatment outcomes in the patient population
 - iv. Soliciting input from diverse community stakeholders, organizations and persons with lived experience
 - v. Efforts to adequately engage underserved foreign-born individuals and families in the project's catchment area.
 - vi. How stakeholder input from service users and individuals from marginalized/underserved populations was used when creating the diversity, inclusion, equity, cultural and linguistic competence plan
 - vii. Discuss how the plan will be regularly reviewed and updated.

Equity Structure

- e. Describe the organization's committees/workgroups that focus on reducing disparities in access, quality, and treatment outcomes for marginalized populations (diversity, inclusion, equity, cultural/linguistic competence).

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- f. Describe the organization's committees/workgroups that focus on incorporating participants of services into the agency's governance. Note - it is important to describe how membership of any such committee/workgroup includes people with lived experience and representatives from the most prevalent cultural groups to be served in this project.

Workforce Diversity and Inclusion

- g. Describe program efforts to recruit, hire and retain a) staff from the most prevalent cultural group of service users and b) staff with lived experience with mental health and receiving mental health services.

Language Access

- h. Describe efforts to meet the language access needs of the clients served by this project (limited English proficient, Deaf/ASL). This information should include the use of data to identify the most prevalent language access needs, availability of direct care staff who speak the most prevalent languages, the provision of best practice approaches to provide language access services (i.e., phone, video interpretation). Also, include information about efforts to ensure all staff with direct contact with clients are knowledgeable about using these resources. Additionally, provide information about the plan to provide documents and forms in the languages of the most prevalent cultural groups of its service users (consent forms, releases of information, medication information, rights, and grievances procedures). This section should also include information related to: addressing other language accessibility needs (Braille, limited reading skills); service descriptions and promotional material.

Recovery Values

- i. Describe the agency or program's plan to espouse recovery and resilience-oriented values into practice.

Collaboration with Diverse Community-Based Stakeholders/Organizations

- j. For this project, describe proposed efforts to partner, collaborate with and include diverse, culturally relevant community partners in service provision and in the gathering of stakeholder input. This includes information about subcontracting entities (if applicable) and other efforts to ensure government resources reach organizations and populations that are historically economically marginalized, including those that are peer run.

6.6 Financial Assessment

- a. The proposal must include a 5-year Budget (Appendix B). \$100,000 is available annually for a total of \$500,000. The indirect cost/administrative overhead rate is capped at 15%. Providers must follow Consolidated Fiscal Report (CFR) Ratio-Value guidance which excludes equipment/property from the direct cost base. Federal Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreements (NICRA) are not allowable. Any travel costs included in the Budget must conform to New York State rates for travel

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reimbursement. Applicants should list staff by position, full-time equivalent (FTE), and salary.

- b. Describe how your agency manages its operating budget. Please include the following:
- detailed expense components that make up the total operating expenses;
 - the calculation or logic that supports the budgeted value of each category; and,
 - description of how salaries are equitable and adequate to attract and retain qualified peer support workers.
 - describe the use of incidentals and costs to support bridging in the community