
# MH253007 - Expansion of Peer Bridger Services

# Request for Proposals/Request for Application

**Grant Procurements**

**(On-Line Submission Required)**

**November 2025**

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# 1. Introduction And Background

## 1.1 Purpose of the Request for Proposal

OMH is committed to the support of individuals 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 three (3) Article 28 facilities with inpatient psychiatric units committed to supporting individuals from hospital to community through the provision of Peer Bridger services. Each of three hospitals will receive $300,000 per year for five years to operate a Peer Bridger program for a total of $900,000 annual amount statewide. The amount prescribed allows for the hiring of three peer support specialists (NYCPS) and travel and incidentals to support bridging from hospital to community.

Peer support services continue to demonstrate efficacy in supporting individual wellness and recovery. In particular, Peer Bridger services are designed to accompany individuals discharging from more restrictive environments which have been shown to impact a person's ability to establish themselves as fully participating and included members of their community of choice. It is intended to provide voluntary and mutual assistance that adheres to the values and principles of peer support and is built on the foundational aspect of relationship.

Bridger support is 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 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, 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 support reduced hospitalizations and cost to the system, its ultimate value lies in strengths-based and person-first approach that fosters hope that individuals can live a life that provides meaning and purpose. 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.

***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

Funding is open to Article 28 facilities with inpatient psychiatric units to provide Peer Bridger services to individuals discharging from a restrictive environment into the community. Awards will be made to three Article 28 facilities with inpatient psychiatric

units to develop and implement a Peer Bridger Program with the capacity to hire three Peer Bridgers per hospital with no more than one award per OMH Region.

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:

Jeremy Rossello
Contract Management Specialist 2
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 | 11/6/2025 |
| Questions Due | 12/01/2025 |
| Questions and Answers Posted on Website | 12/22/2025 |
| Proposals Due by 2:00 PM EST* | 1/15/2026 |
| Anticipated Award Notification | 2/18/2026 |
| Anticipated Contract Start Date | 7/1/2026 |

*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 2.7 and Section 2.8 for additional Prequalification Information.

Eligible applicants are Article 28 facilities with inpatient psychiatric units.

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 "Expansion of Peer Bridger Services" 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 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 2.3 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 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.
- 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 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. OMH expects that all contactors make a good-faith effort to utilize Minority and/or Women Owned Business Enterprises (M/WBE), 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 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:

i. If an award recipient fails to submit a MWBE Utilization Plan;

ii. If an award recipient fails to submit a written remedy to a notice of deficiency;

iii. If an award recipient fails to submit a request for waiver; or,

iv. 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 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 0% 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). 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 |
|---|---|
| Notification of LGUs | 1 |
| Population and Description of Program | 29 |
| Implementation and Agency Performance | 35 |
| Reporting and Quality Improvement | 5 |
| Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and Peer Support Language | 10 |
| 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 (Sections 6.3) of the Proposal Narrative will be ranked higher.

### 4.3 Process for Awarding Contracts

### 4.4 Initial Awards and Allocations

Awards will be made to three applicants, each in unique OMH regions. The OMH Regions are Long Island, New York City, Hudson River, Central New York, and Western New York. For more information about the regions, please navigate to: https://omh.ny.gov/omhweb/aboutomh/fieldoffices.html

Proposals will be ranked, and 3 award(s) will be made, one to each applicant with the highest score in unique OMH regions to assume the operation of the Expansion of Peer Bridger Services.

### 4.5 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.

### 4.6 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. These facilities will be willing to provide Peer Bridger services to individuals discharging from a restrictive environment into the community and collaborate with OMH Office

of Advocacy and Peer Support Services and training and a technical assistance entity that will help integrate the values and principles of peer support into the culture of this service.

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 providing hope that individuals can live a life that provides meaning and purpose. 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.

The Local Governmental Unit (LGU), Director of Community Service (DCS)/Mental Health Commissioner has a statutory authority and responsibility for oversight and cross-system management of the local mental hygiene system to meet the needs of individuals and families affected by mental illness, substance use disorder and/or intellectual/ developmental disability in their communities. LGU collaboration is a vital part of the work of the Article 28 Peer Bridger Program. Applicants should notify the LGU(s) of their intent to apply.

### 5.2 Objectives and Responsibilities

The awarded vendors 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.

Peer Bridger services are built upon the foundation of relationship, from admission to discharge and into community. Bridger services are offered by individuals with the lived expertise of navigating similar situations and circumstances, and who are able to assist in discovering hope and possibility while providing supports for situations and potential stressors that can develop as someone leaves institutional settings.

Peer Bridger’s work as coaches rather than case managers, guiding and offering support and options. Peer Bridgers supports are for the individual first and foremost, are voluntary, and seek to offer more than just connections to after care appointments and follow-up. Peer Bridgers help individuals explore existing community resources that address the eight dimensions of wellness, working with someone to explore domains of life that are valued and desired, focusing on life role goals that encompass more than just medication compliance and program attendance.

Peer Bridger relationship-building starts at admission if and when desired by participants. The aims of the Peer Bridger program are met through the following tasks, including but not limited to:

- Conducting regular meetings with participants.
- Relationship-building activities while participants are in the hospital.
- Facilitating groups about discharge – educational and individualized for staff and patients on topics related to community inclusion and participation following discharge.
- Supporting participants in understanding and completing WRAP plans, psychiatric advanced directives, and other tools as indicated and consented to.
- Supporting participants in meetings so that individuals engage in self-advocacy and shared decision-making during treatment team and other related meetings.

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

- Granting Bridgers access to the areas, programs, services, and resources needed to support people effectively in the hospital and out in the community.
- Incorporating Bridgers fully into the treatment team (e.g., by participating in morning meetings)
- Planning for access to reliable transportation for Bridgers to conduct meetings in the community
- Providing access to technology and other services for Bridgers
- Ensuring Bridgers have access to high-quality, trauma-informed and responsive, culturally curious, person-first, and current resources to share with participants.
- Providing space for Bridgers to learn with and from each other and other team members such as through supervision, reflective practice, in-discipline learning and mentoring, and more.
- Maintaining accurate reporting and case records according to Regulation and Program Guidance.
- Ensure adaptability in EHR systems for person-centered peer support.
- Ensuring continuous quality improvement of services, including regular monitoring and evaluation of outcomes. To support these efforts, it is expected that providers have a quality, supervisory, operational and IT / data infrastructure to routinely self-monitor and ensure ongoing quality improvement of services, including analyzing utilization review findings and recommendations.
- Submitting data to OMH, including recipient-identified data, quality and program data. Data submission requirements and guidance will be provided by OMH.

### 5.3 Operating Funding

Three (3) awards will be made in the amount of $300,000 per year for five years.

Each of three hospitals will receive $300,000 to operate a Peer Bridger program for a total of $900,000 statewide. The amount prescribed allows for the hiring of three peer support specialists (NYCPS) and travel and incidentals to support bridging from hospital to community.

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 Notification of LGUs

a. To receive the point for LGU notification, identified in section 4.1 Evaluation Criteria, please provide proof that LGU(s) were notified of your agency's Intent to Apply to this RFP (e.g., sent email, certified letter, etc.). A list of County Local Mental Hygiene Directors can be found here.

### 6.2 Population and Description of Program

Services are to be provided to individuals 18 of age and older who are about to discharge from an Article 28 hospital and would benefit from sustained Peer Bridger services offered by a qualified peer support staff.

a. Provide the location for which this proposal applies. Describe in narrative the characteristics of the population to be served, including an understanding of all potential stressors one may be facing that lead to an admission. Please utilize data specific to your region without relying solely on global or national data wherever possible.
b. Describe your understanding of the needs of the Bridger program's target population in the intended service area, emphasizing those who may have limited support networks/resources. Please utilize data specific to your region without relying solely on global or national data wherever possible.

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 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.
e. Describe the discharge practices of your Article 28 hospital and how individuals will benefit from the Bridger model. Ensure response also details outcomes relating to your experience supporting the Bridger program's target population.
f. Describe your experience hiring and retaining peer support staff. Please include certification type, opportunities for advancement, what activities are conducted to retain staff and improve morale, and any other details you wish to include.
g. Describe your experience in collaborating and coordinating with providers of mental health, substance use, medical, and other services, to work closely with program participants and ensure connection to treatment providers and other supports.
h. Describe your network of community and/or natural supports, and how you plan to utilize Bridgers in harnessing those networks to facilitate supportive connections for participants. Please also detail your success in assisting participants in achieving community inclusion and reducing social isolation, where participants express a desire for these circumstances.
i. Describe your agency's understanding and application of peer support values, principles, and practices beyond the understanding of an ability to provide recovery-focused and strengths-based services. Please also include your agency's knowledge of and experience with training and education relating to peer program development.
j. Describe your approaches to data collection, including collecting data and compiling indicators reflecting Personal Wellness, Individual Recovery Outcomes measures, participant demographic information, Dimensions of Wellness, information pertaining to psychiatric advance directives and participant unique needs and preferences. Describe how you track changes in indicators over time.
k. Detail your plans for person-centered support planning, including ways in which the plan engages and motivates participants toward their recovery using peer support, founded on respect and shared responsibility

### 6.3 Implementation

a. Provide a realistic timeline for the project, including key activities and responsible staff. Describe start-up and phase-in activities necessary to implement the Peer Bridger program in your facility. Include timeframes and accountable parties. Also include the equipment, space, and other needs for the program as well as administrative oversight supports necessary for successful programmatic operation.

b. Provide a detailed description of the recruitment and hiring of certified Peer Support Staff and a detailed description of the roles of these staff. Please include job descriptions if available.

c. Discuss how your facility will provide trauma-informed and responsive, and culturally appropriate services.

d. Describe how Bridging will be conducted in the hospital, including by the use of group and individual meetings, treatment team meetings, etc. Response should include the vision for how Bridgers will support individuals in learning skills related to self-advocacy and self-efficacy.

e. Describe how Bridging will be conducted in the community, with attention to the resources needed, availability of bridging services, connection to other relevant resources, and more. Response should include how Bridger Staff will meet participants at times and in environments that are most convenient to them and include how necessary tools and resources will be made available to staff so they can conduct business.

f. Identify and describe what types of activities and items Bridgers will be able to use program resources for in the community, such as travel to location, meeting activities, items to support an individual meeting self-expressed goals, etc.

g. How will Bridgers support an individual in becoming self-sufficient from the Bridger program and discuss discharge.

h. Describe the staff training that will be given prior to the teams enrolling participants, and the ongoing training and supervision that will be provided to ensure fidelity to the Peer Bridger model. Please also detail any staff training that will be supportive to the supervisors of the Peer Bridgers to ensure fidelity to the program model.

i. Identify and describe resources that will be employed by Bridgers including but not limited to WRAP and Psychiatric Advanced Directives.

j. Describe ways in which you plan to collect and use data for program management, to promote best care and - most importantly - to support the achievement of participants' recovery goals.

k. Describe your capacity to provide in-discipline support to Peer Bridgers and/or a willingness to work with the Office of Advocacy and Peer Support Services to navigate support for your Bridger staff. Also include any general plans for collaborating with the Office of Advocacy and Peer Support Services on implementing and managing the Peer Bridger Program.

### 6.4 Agency Performance, Reporting, and Quality Improvement

To objectively measure the impact of the Peer Bridger program, awardees 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 of dedicated research and evaluation activities aimed at determining Program outcomes.

Programs should describe their current or anticipated Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) process including what is expected to collect data that will tell them how they are

doing in achieving objectives. Specific program quality improvement activities should include:

a. How your organization will utilize the CQI data
b. Plans for collecting and using data to monitor and improve program performance
c. How the organization will provide training and support to systems to support assure staff competencies
d. The process that peer supervisor staff will implement to identify problems and develop solutions
e. Establishing data collection systems to support quality improvement
f. Tracking the programs record in providing required deliverables
g. Quarterly reporting to OMH

## 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:

    - Workforce diversity (data-informed recruitment)
    - Workforce inclusion
    - Reducing disparities in access quality, and treatment outcomes in the patient population
    - Soliciting input from diverse community stakeholders, organizations

and persons with lived experience

- Efforts to adequately engage underserved foreign-born individuals and families in the project's catchment area.
- 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
- 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).

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). $300,000 is available annually. 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 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 attract and retain qualified peer support workers.
- describe the use of incidentals and costs to support bridging in the community