



**Office of  
Mental Health**

**Youth Safe Spaces Program**

**Request for Proposals**

**Grant Procurements**

**(On-Line Submission Required)**

**Statewide Financial System (SFS) Identifier- OMH 135**

**March 2025**

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### 1. Introduction And Background

#### 1.1 Purpose of the Request for Proposal

One in five youth and young adults experience mental health challenges, yet nearly 60% do not receive the support they need<sup>1</sup>. In 2023, Governor Hochul launched the [Youth Mental Health Listening Tour](#).

Young people gave feedback on the specific challenges they face:

- Challenges in developing positive relationships: Many youth face difficulties in building positive peer relationships and social skills. This reflects a notable absence of school and community-based programs designed to foster these connections.
- Perceived lack of empathy and cultural sensitivity: Youth frequently express dissatisfaction with the perceived lack of empathy and cultural awareness among adults. As a result, many prefer to seek support from peers and trusted adults who share their demographic and cultural backgrounds.
- Insufficient community-based resources: Limited investment in community resources has deprived many young people of opportunities for recreation and mental wellness promotion.

In particular, young people highlighted the need for safe spaces where they can interact with peers, participate in community activities, and design the vision for the programming. The lack of designated safe spaces in schools and communities exacerbates these challenges, leading to heightened mental health crises, disengagement from services, and unmet basic needs, especially among high-risk populations (e.g., BIPOC (Black Indigenous People of Color), migrants, LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, Questioning/Queer), differently abled, Native American, etc.).

In response to youth demands for more youth-driven programs, New York State (NYS) Office of Mental Health (OMH) has announced funding for 3-5 pilot Youth Safe Space Programs targeting individuals ages 12–24. This program will create standalone Youth Safe Spaces Programs and designate other community spaces—such as libraries, OASAS Youth Recovery Clubhouses, Boys and Girls Clubs, Park & Recreation Centers, etc.—as Safe Spaces through an application and funding process. **Applicants are not required to be licensed OMH providers to participate.**

These Safe Spaces will:

- Reduce social isolation by providing peer-led, supportive, culturally responsive, non-judgmental environments for youth and young adults through the promotion of positive peer relationships and non-clinical activities.
- Enhance youth understanding of wellness and empower them to advocate and access community resources by facilitating linkages to mental wellness resources, both non-

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<sup>1</sup> Reinert, M, Fritze, D & Nguyen, T (July 2024). “The State of Mental Health in America 2024.” Mental Health America, Alexandria VA.

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clinical (non-traditional) and clinical (traditional).

- Increase community capacity for youth mental wellness activities by facilitating peer-led trainings & providing support to adult allies and community members when seeking support for young people.
- Provide opportunities for young people to empower themselves in order to advocate for better youth services and supports in their communities by teaching/coaching in advocacy and other skills to promote better services and supports for themselves, their peers, and their communities.

The Youth Safe Spaces Program framework embodies a multifaceted approach to youth mental health, prioritizing voluntary, youth-led, and non-clinical programming. Its foundational principles include positive youth development, recovery-oriented principles, civic engagement and advocacy, mental health awareness and education, and social equity and justice. While Safe Spaces do not replace clinical settings, they address critical cultural, financial, and logistical barriers that prevent many young people from seeking traditional mental health services. By offering voluntary, non-clinical support, these community-driven programs complement clinical care and fill a vital gap in the mental health care continuum. Awardees will participate in training and technical assistance provided by OMH and adhere to forthcoming program guidance to ensure alignment with the initiative's objectives. This framework represents a significant step toward meeting the mental health needs of New York State's young people by creating accessible and culturally sensitive spaces that promote wellness, recovery, and community connection.

Programs deemed safe and trusted by community members are encouraged to apply to implement the Youth Safe Spaces framework. These include, but are not limited to: community grassroots organizations, faith-based organizations, libraries, art galleries, museums, recreation centers (e.g., skate parks, sports clubs/facilities, etc.), community art centers, youth mentorship programs (e.g., Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, Boys & Girls Club, Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, FosterClub, etc.), or other non-profit community programs.

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

### 1.2 Target Population/Eligibility Criteria

The program is designed to support youth and young adults in communities across New York State. This includes individuals at risk of developing mental health challenges as well as those who may or may not have a documented mental health diagnosis. Safe Spaces Program participants are between the ages of 12 and 24, with exceptions as appropriate.

## 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

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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](mailto:OMHLocalProcurement@omh.ny.gov)

### 2.2 Letter of Intent

Agencies interested in responding to this Request for Proposal **must** submit a Letter of Intent to Bid to the OMH Issuing Officer by the date referenced in section 2.3. The letter must cite when the LGU was informed in writing (see Section 1.1). The Letter of Intent to Bid shall be non-binding.

Please email the letter of intent to the Issuing Officer at:

[OMHLocalProcurement@omh.ny.gov](mailto:OMHLocalProcurement@omh.ny.gov)

You must put LOI for Youth Safe Spaces Program in the Subject line.

### 2.3 Key Events/Timeline

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| RFP Release Date                        | 3/27/2025 |
| Questions Due                           | 4/17/2025 |
| Questions and Answers Posted on Website | 5/8/2025  |
| Letters of Intent Due                   | 5/15/2025 |
| Proposals Due by 2:00 PM EST*           | 6/3/2025  |
| Anticipated Award Notification          | 7/9/2025  |
| Anticipated Contract Start Date         | 1/1/2026  |

\*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.**

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### 2.4 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.

### 2.5 Eligible Agencies

Eligible applicants must:

- Be a not-for-profit agency with 501(c) (3) incorporation located and doing business in New York State
- Have at least 5 years of demonstrated experience working with underserved communities of youth and young adults ages 12-24, in a non-clinical setting.
- Attest that the proposed location of the proposed Youth Safe Spaces Program is not located in the community of an existing OASAS Youth Recovery Clubhouse.

Eligible Option 1 applicants' proposed location for a Youth Safe Spaces Program must be located in communities **without** an existing OASAS Youth Recovery Clubhouse or in areas where services provided do not duplicate those already available.

**Table 1- OASAS Youth Recovery Clubhouse Exclusion Areas**

| OASAS Youth Recovery Clubhouse                        | Town (County/Borough)      | Zip code |
|---|----------------------------|----------|
| Club Odyssey  | Oneonta (Otsego)           | 13820    |
| Restoration Society, Inc. Clubhouse Buffalo           | Buffalo (Erie)             | 14214    |
| Creative Connections                                  | Amsterdam (Montgomery)     | 12010    |
| EPIC Zone   | Geneva (Ontario)           | 14456    |
| Friends of Recovery - Delaware and Otsego             | Oneonta (Otsego)           | 13820    |
| Horizons  | Massena (St. Lawrence)     | 13662    |
| Housing Works   | Brooklyn (Kings)           | 11208    |
| Mental Health Association of Columbia Greene Counties | Catskill (Greene)          | 12414    |
| Mental Health Association of Columbia/Greene Counties | Hudson (Colombia)          | 12534    |
| Mosholu Montefiore Community Center                   | Van Cortlandt Park (Bronx) | 10467    |
| Native American Community Services - Erie Clubhouse   | Buffalo (Erie)             | 14207    |

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|  |                         |       |
|--|-------------------------|-------|
| Native American Community Services - Niagara Clubhouse | Niagara Falls (Niagara) | 14305 |
| Our Gathering Place- Ögwaya'dayeista'                  | Irving (Erie)           | 14081 |
| Ronthahiihsthà:ke                                      | Bombay (Franklin)       | 13655 |
| Shinnecock Indian Nation Clubhouse                     | Southampton (Suffolk)   | 11968 |
| Stayin' Healthy  | Silver Lake (Richmond)  | 10301 |
| TC Commons   | Elmira (Chemung)        | 14901 |
| The CORE   | Corona (Queens)         | 11368 |
| The LGBT Center Youth Clubhouse                        | Midtown West (New York) | 10011 |
| The Living Room (Satellite)                            | Suffren (Rockland)      | 10901 |
| The Living Room (Satellite)                            | Cedarhurst (Nassau)     | 11516 |
| The SPOT   | Oswego (Oswego)         | 13126 |
| Yonkers YMCA Clubhouse                                 | Yonkers (Westchester)   | 10701 |

Eligible applicants do not need to be licensed and/or funded by the New York State Office of Mental Health.

Note: only not-for-profit applicants are required to adhere to the Prequalification requirement as described in Section 2.9.

Prequalification is required for all not-for-profit organizations seeking grant funding from New York State. Please see Section 2.9 and Section 2.10 for additional Prequalification Information.

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.

### 2.6 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](mailto:OMHLocalProcurement@omh.ny.gov) by 2:00 PM EST on the "Questions Due" date indicated in section 2.3 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 "Name of 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 2.3.

### 2.7 Addenda to Request for Proposals

In the event that it becomes necessary to revise any part of the RFP during the



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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.

### 2.8 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 2.5; or
- Proposals that do not comply with bid submission and/or required format instructions as specified in 2.10 or
- Proposals from eligible not-for-profit applicants who have not completed Vendor Prequalification, as described in 2.9, by 2:00 PM EST on the Proposal Due Date posted in section 2.3.

### 2.9 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.**

### 2.10 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**

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**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.**

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](mailto: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](mailto: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

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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 5-10 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 may result in a grant application being disqualified.

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.

Specific questions about SFS should be referred to the SFS Help Desk at [helpdesk@sfs.ny.gov](mailto: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

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[https://upk.sfs.ny.gov/UPK/VEN101/FILES/SFS\\_Vendor\\_Portal\\_Access\\_Reference\\_Guide.pdf](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](https://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 whose conduct 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;

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- 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 business 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

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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 Master Grant Contract.

### **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:

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- 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

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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 Master 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



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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-I 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 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.

### **3.10 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 2.10 of this RFP.

### **3.11 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

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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.

### 3.12 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 Executive Summary  | Pass/Fail  |
| 6.2. Demonstration of Need   | 10         |
| 6.3. Program Description   | 35         |
| 6.4. Implementation  | 10         |
| 6.5. Agency Performance  | 10         |
| 6.6. Reporting & Quality Assurance                                   | 5          |
| 6.7. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging and Recipient Input | 10         |
| 6.8 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 2.10. If a proposal is not complete or does not meet the basic eligibility and participation standards as outlined in Section 2.5, the proposal will be

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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 Program Description (Section 6.3) in 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 3- 5 awards made to the applicant(s) with the highest score to assume the operation of a new Youth Safe Space of \$500,000 or a Youth Safe Space designation of \$250,000 until available funding is exhausted.

Initial awards will prioritize geographic diversity across New York's economic development regions, with funding available as below.

- **Option 1:** Establish a new Youth Safe Spaces Program
  - Eligible applicants for Option 1 must be located in communities without an existing OASAS Youth Recovery Clubhouse or in areas where services provided do not duplicate those already available. (Refer to Section 2.5)
- **Option 2:** Add the Youth Safe Spaces framework and services to an existing youth-serving space designation.
  - Eligible applicants for Option 2 must already be recognized as safe spaces and trusted by community members. Examples include community grassroots organizations, libraries, schools, faith-based organizations, OASAS Youth Recovery Clubhouses, Boys & Girls Clubs, Parks and Recreation Centers, and similar entities.

Awards will be granted based on the highest score, with no more than one award per EDR, as outlined below. Awards will be issued until funding is exhausted. Three to five awards will be distributed, meaning not all EDRs will receive an award.

#### Table 2- Economic Development Regions

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| <b>Economic Development</b> | <b>Counties in EDR</b>  |
|-----------------------------|---|
| <b>Region (EDR)</b>         |   |
| Capital Region              | Albany, Columbia, Greene, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady, Warren, Washington |
| Central New York            | Cayuga, Cortland, Madison, Onondaga, Oswego                                     |
| Finger Lakes                | Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Orleans, Ontario, Seneca, Wayne, Wyoming, Yates    |
| Mid-Hudson                  | Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Sullivan, Westchester                       |
| Mohawk Valley               | Fulton, Herkimer, Montgomery, Oneida, Otsego, Schoharie                         |
| North Country               | Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Jefferson, Hamilton, Lewis, St. Lawrence              |
| Southern Tier               | Broome, Chemung, Chenango, Delaware, Schuyler, Steuben, Tompkins                |
| Western New York            | Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, Niagara                                |
| Long Island                 | Nassau, Suffolk   |
| New York City               | Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens, New York, Richmond                                     |

### 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, an OMH determination that the applicant has failed to adequately progress a project within 18 months of the award notification date; an OMH determination that the project is not feasible; or an OMH determination that a lease for a site is not minimally commensurate with the bond amortization and said lease cannot be renegotiated, failure to meet start-up milestones, failure to maintain staff-to-individual ratio, or poor performance outcomes.

A contractor will be provided notification if there is need for reassignment

- **Non-Compliance with Contract Terms:** Failure to meet deliverables outlined in the contract, such as: providing required & optional services (e.g., peer support, workshops, or youth engagement activities); maintaining a safe, inclusive, and welcoming environment; submitting reports or documentation on time; misuse or mismanagement of funds, including failure to follow approved budget.
- **Failure to Adhere to Program & Fiscal Standards:** Not upholding youth-led, trauma-informed, and recovery-oriented principles, lack of culturally competent or inclusive practices, violations of minimum requirements, such as not providing essential services or failing to maintain adequate staffing levels, failure to meet financial obligations, or inappropriate use of funds.
- **Unsafe or Harmful Practices:** Incidents of harm or unsafe practices, such as:

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neglect or mistreatment of youth participants & staff, unsafe physical conditions at the site, breaches of confidentiality or privacy, allowing or fostering toxic or discriminatory environments.

- Lack of Accountability: Refusal to cooperate with audits, monitoring, or evaluations, or inability or unwillingness to provide transparency in operations.
- Community Distrust: Loss of trust or confidence from the community due to negative incidents, lack of communication, or program mismanagement.

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.

OMH reserves the right to conduct a readiness review of the selected applicant prior to the execution of the contract. The purpose of this review is to verify that the applicant is able to comply with all participation standards and meets the conditions detailed in its proposal.

## 5. Scope of Work

### 5.1 Introduction

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 Youth Safe Space Program.

Applicants should notify the LGU(s) in writing of their intent to apply; a copy of the letter must be provided with proposal submission.

#### Framework

The awardee will utilize The New York State (NYS) Office of Mental Health (OMH) Youth Safe Spaces framework, which represents a multifaceted approach to youth mental health. This model provides free, voluntary, community-based, non-clinical, peer and youth-led programming that prioritizes mental wellness, self-empowerment, and community connection. At its core is [Positive Youth Development](#), which supports young people through meaningful engagement in community activities, leadership opportunities, and skill-building. The program integrates [Recovery-Oriented Principles](#), emphasizing respect, peer support, and holistic approaches to mental health. Each Youth Safe Spaces Program centers on *Civic Engagement and Advocacy*, encouraging

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youth to actively drive positive change in their communities. Additionally, the model promotes *Mental Health Awareness and Education* while embedding principles of *Social Equity and Justice*, ensuring that every aspect is inclusive, culturally responsive, and aligned with the diverse needs of each individual youth. This comprehensive approach creates sustainable, youth-driven programming that facilitates mental health recovery, resilience, a sense of belonging, safety, and improves trust, access, and utilization to supports and services for young people, particularly in underserved and marginalized communities.

To strengthen linkages with existing supports within the mental health system, Youth Safe Spaces Programs will be required to establish partnerships with behavioral health providers to facilitate access to treatment services for individuals in need.

### **Peer Advisory Board**

The Safe Space must have a rotating Peer Advisory Board (PAB). The majority of the PAB (51% or greater) must be comprised of representatives of the target population and may also include the local community (e.g., adolescent youth, young adults, families, and community partners). The PAB should be operational within 90 days of the start of the contract. OMH reserves the right to send representatives to PAB meetings to monitor operations and progress.

### **Community**

Implementation focuses on communities within New York's Economic Development Regions (see Table 2, Section 4.3) where youth and young adults lack adequate programming and safe spaces, and meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Have experienced a significant traumatic community event
- Experience high rates of youth homelessness
- Face significant transportation barriers, making it difficult to reach mental health care and supports.
- Are part of historically marginalized communities including indigenous or tribal communities with limited access to behavioral health resources.

### **Setting**

Youth Safe Spaces Programs must meet the specific needs of the community while adhering to the requirements outlined in the RFP. Facilities should be flexible and adaptable, providing sufficient room to support a variety of activities and services. Additionally, the environment should be safe, welcoming, and accessible, ensuring comfort and functionality for the youth it serves.

### **Participants**

Youth Safe Spaces Programs serve participants between the ages of 12-24, with exceptions as appropriate based on community needs. Where Youth Safe Spaces Programs serve both minors and young adults, there are clearly defined areas to support developmentally appropriate programming for relevant age groups (e.g., 12-17 and 18-

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24 years old), ensuring a safe and structured environment that ensures developmentally appropriate peer groups.

### Staffing

Programs must maintain a minimum **1:10 staff-to-youth ratio** during program hours. Programs must have **2 Youth Peer Advocates** (credentialed, provisionally credentialed, or actively pursuing credentials) present during hours that the program is open to youth. Option 1 programs must employ 1.0 FTE Program Manager and Option 2 must employ **0.75 FTE Program Manager**, dedicated to managing program operations and providing oversight and direction to the program.

The budget should allocate resources to ensure appropriate 1:1 staff supervision. Peer supervision should be made available through other internal staff or external consultants if the Director or Program Manager lacks peer support experience. Organizations must adhere to the [National Ethical Guidelines and Practice Standards](#).

The Youth Safe Spaces Program must also establish partnerships with behavioral health providers to ensure access to treatment services for individuals in need, as well as partnerships with other area providers to ensure access to other needed services.

### Training

Youth Safe Spaces Program staff are required to participate in learning communities, complete OMH-identified trainings, and engage with resources such as Statewide Youth Peer Support Infrastructure, Youth Move National, The Trevor Project, NYS Trauma Informed Network and Resource Center, Collective Impact Organizations, and/or the county's System of Care network. Staff should attend meetings to review progress, outcomes, and develop best practices. Training in specialty areas such as youth housing, substance use disorder, community mapping, vocational support, immigration, and systems literacy is encouraged.

Staff are also encouraged to connect with peer networks for learning, support, and maintaining credentials.

### Volume and Hours

#### **Option 1:** Establish a new Youth Safe Spaces Program

Applicants may choose to establish a new Youth Safe Space (i.e., a physical space not currently in use as a youth-serving space). Proposals choosing this option are expected to serve (both on-site and off-site) a minimum of 500 unduplicated youth per year. Proposals choosing this option are expected to be open for a majority of days in the week during times accessible to young people including during school breaks and holidays. An Option 1 Safe Space may not be established in the same zip code as an existing [OASAS Youth Recovery Clubhouse](#) (see Table 1, Section 2.5).

**The budget for Option 1 is \$500,000 annually.**

**Option 2:** Add Youth Safe Space services and framework to an existing youth-serving space such as libraries, OASAS clubhouses, faith-based organizations, recreational centers, and others.

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Applicant may propose an enhancement, ensuring that there is no duplication of existing neighborhood/community services. Proposals choosing this option are expected to serve (both on-site and off-site) a minimum of 250 unduplicated youth per year. Services must be offered the majority of days each week, including during school breaks and holidays, to ensure accessibility for young people. For locations where the existing youth-serving space is prohibited from remaining open on this schedule, applicants will document why, what efforts have been taken to address this prohibition, and what alternative arrangements will be made to ensure access during these periods.

**The budget for Option 2 is \$250,000 annually.**

### 5.2 Objectives and Responsibilities

The implementation of Youth Safe Space Programs is expected to result in the following outcomes:

- **Reduce social isolation-** Youth Safe Spaces Programs will decrease social isolation amongst youth by fostering positive peer interactions, connections, and promote a sense of belonging and foster a community of mutual support.
- **Foster full inclusion and cultural responsiveness-** Youth Safe Spaces Programs will be youth-led and youth-guided, reflecting diverse racial, ethnic, gender, and sexual identities. Programs will be designed to be trauma-informed and -responsive, addressing the unique experiences and needs of each youth.
- **Enhance youth understanding of wellness-** Through workshops, discussions, and interactive activities, youth will gain valuable knowledge and skills to manage their mental health, make informed decisions, and engage in healthy behavior.
- **Empower youth to access community resources-** Through workshops, resource fairs, resource directories, and one-on-one assistance, Youth Safe Spaces Programs will ensure youth are well-informed about where to seek help and support within their community, making it easier for them to locate and access the help they need when facing challenges.
- **Increase community capacity through youth mental wellness training-** Youth Safe Spaces Programs will collaborate with trusted community settings, such as libraries, faith-based organizations, public parks/recreation areas, to train staff on the necessary skills needed to recognize and address the mental wellness needs of youth and guide them to relevant and appropriate services and supports.
- **Empower youth to advocate for better youth services and supports in their communities** – Youth Safe Spaces Programs have the opportunity to help youth not only focus on their own wellness but learn advocacy and other skills to promote better services and supports for themselves, their peers and their communities.
- **Enable youth to have better self-awareness about their individual passions and skills and how those may shape the work that they will pursue – Youth Safe Spaces Programs** have the opportunity to offer opportunities for career exploration,



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identify internships, and a wide variety of enrichment activities that support the transition from school to work.

Applicants are required to offer a range of services that meet the mental wellness, social, and developmental needs of the youth. Applicants must indicate the program option for which they are seeking funding. The awardee must be prepared to implement service components by the close of the 3rd quarter of the first contract year.

**Table 3- Required Service Components**

| Service Component               | Description   | Requirement Type |          |
|---------------------------------|---|------------------|----------|
|                                 |   | Option 1         | Option 2 |
| Essential Needs                 | Provide Wi-Fi, food resources**, transportation support**, phone charging stations, and computers.  | ✓                | ✓        |
| Essential Needs                 | Provide laundry and shower facilities   | ✓                |          |
| Mental Health Supports          | Non-clinical mental health support, peer-led workshops, meditation/health/wellness groups, support groups, suicide prevention programming, etc. | ✓                | ✓        |
| Referrals & Linkages            | Partnerships to support youth-initiated referrals, supports suggested by staff.   | ✓                | ✓        |
| Community Workshops & Forums    | Workshops, forums, and training for youth, adult allies, and community leaders.   | ✓                | ✓        |
| Recreational Activities         | Sports, arts, and cultural activities for social interaction, community building, respite and personal growth.                                  | ✓                | ✓        |
| Workforce and Education Support | Peer credentialing, resume-building workshops, leadership development, and educational support.   | ✓                |          |

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|                          |   |   |  |
|--------------------------|---|---|--|
| Skill-Building Workshops | Workshops on social skill development, advocacy, mental wellness, Social Emotional Learning (SEL), Substance Use Disorder (SUD) prevention. | ✓ |  |
|--------------------------|---|---|--|

\*All vendors will receive technical assistance and support from OMH to ensure that staff are adequately trained and supported. The program staff will be required to participate in these offerings.

**On-Site Services:**

All required activities must be provided on-site and where indicated in *Offsite Services* below as applicable.

**Off-site Services:**

Off-site services include but are not limited to facilitating youth-led peer support meetings in accessible public spaces such as libraries, schools, or community hubs. Programs may host recreational and wellness activities, such as hiking, sports, art therapy, or mindfulness sessions, in parks or other recreational facilities. Youth-led advocacy and volunteer projects can be coordinated to promote leadership and community engagement. Additionally, programs can organize field trips to museums, cultural sites, or local businesses to foster learning and enrichment. Off-site services may also involve partnering with local organizations to provide specialized support, such as housing assistance, substance use recovery, or vocational training.

**Food Resources:**

Food resources to ensure accessibility and address food insecurity may include stocking healthy snacks and grab-and-go options that youth can access anytime, as well as meal supports for youth. Programs can offer shared kitchen facilities equipped with basic appliances like a microwave, refrigerator, burners, or stove, allowing youth to prepare simple meals or snacks. Partnerships with local food pantries and food banks can supply a stocked food closet with nutritious staple items. Additionally, cooking and nutrition workshops can teach essential skills while empowering youth to make healthy, affordable meals, with the option of providing take-home meal kits. Meal sponsorships or vouchers through partnerships with local restaurants or grocery stores can further ensure access to fresh, prepared food. A minimum of 2% of the budget is expected to be dedicated to food resources.

**Transportation Support:**

Transportation supports to assist with engagement barriers may include but are not limited to: providing vouchers for public transit, ridesharing, or taxis; collaborating with localities and schools to adjust bus routes for convenient drop-offs; and/or offering a program-sponsored shuttle service. Programs can also invest in a vehicle with a dedicated driver or establish a carpool network with families and volunteers. Partnering with local transportation services can further ensure reliable access for youth. A minimum of 2% of the budget is expected to be dedicated to transportation supports.

**Table 4- Program Expectations**

|                                       | Description  | Expectations   |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|--|
|                                       |  | Option 1   | Option 2   |
| Volume                                | The number of unduplicated youth the program is required to serve annually.                        | 500 per year   | 250 per year   |
| Required Program Manager FTE          | The required Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) allocation for the Program Manager position.               | 1  | Minimum .75  |
| Required Hours                        | The program's operating hours or the time during which services must be made available.            | Minimum of 25 hours<br>At least 6 days each week<br>After school availability is required, as well as access to services during school breaks. | Minimum of 25 hours<br>At least 4 days each week<br>After school availability is required, as well as access to services during school breaks. |
| Required Youth Peer Advocate Staffing | The required number of Youth Peer Advocates during program hours by the program.                   | 2  | 2  |
| Required Ratio during Program Hours   | The staff-to-youth ratio that must be maintained during program hours to ensure adequate coverage. | 1:10   | 1:10   |

Programs must adhere to forthcoming OMH Program Guidance and maintain accurate reporting. Youth Safe Spaces Programs are expected to implement continuous quality improvement, with input/guidance of the Peer Advisory Board, through regular monitoring and outcome evaluation. Providers must have robust quality, supervisory, operational, and IT/data infrastructures to self-monitor, analyze utilization reviews, and ensure service improvements. Additionally, providers are required to submit quality and program data to OMH as per guidance that will be provided.

**5.3 Operating Funding**

Three to five awards will be made in the amount of \$250,000 or \$500,000 for the 5

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year(s). Annual funding for each of the 5 year(s) is \$250,000 or \$500,000 depending on award.

It is expected that operating funding in Year 1 may be used for one-time start-up costs including, but not limited to: basic renovations (e.g., painting, flooring, lighting upgrades, kitchen/bathroom updates if applicable), general space enhancements, postage, participant & staff training (including training of trainers), non-clinical prevention screening tools (e.g., suicide prevention, anti-violence, pregnancy, substance use, etc.), vehicle, computers and tablets, hardware, software, printers, phone system and mobile devices, office/program furniture, office supplies, staff recruitment, utilities, insurance, promotional material and marketing, data collection or IT costs, or Electronic Recordkeeping system (reporting capabilities) enhancements.

Operating funding is intended to support the specialized staff as outlined in Table 4 (Section 5.2), fringe benefits, OTPS, property costs, participant transportation, participant essential needs, program supplies and equipment, ongoing staff training, administration and overhead. Funding for this program may not be utilized in any other program. Any misuse of funds or purchase of unapproved or unnecessary items will result in corrective actions, which may include repayment of misallocated funds and potential contract suspension. Programs must adhere to budget guidelines and are prohibited from using funds for items such as personal expenses, luxury goods, or non-program-related activities. Regular financial reporting/reviews and audits will be conducted to monitor compliance.

Note: Purchases may be allowable if they directly align with the program's goals, benefit the participants, and are necessary for program activities. For example, kitchen equipment could support culinary skills workshops or community-building events that enhance youth engagement. However, all such purchases must be reasonable, cost-effective, and justified as essential to the program's mission. Programs are encouraged to seek prior approval from OMH to ensure compliance with allowable expense guidelines. Extravagant or unnecessary purchases that do not demonstrably benefit the youth or align with program objectives will not be permitted.

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

### 6. Proposal Narrative

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

**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.**

Any supporting attachments MUST be labeled specific to the question it is associated with. Attachments that are not labeled may result in either a 0 for the question or disqualification of the application.

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### **6.1 Executive Summary**

Provide an executive summary of the proposed Youth Safe Spaces Program, including the program's Option Choice (1 or 2), proposed location (including zip code), approach to delivering the required service components (refer to Table 3, Section 5.2), and alignment with youth peer support principles and attest to:

- Having at least 5 years of demonstrated experience working with underserved communities of youth and young adults ages 12-24, in a non-clinical setting.
- The proposed Youth Safe Spaces Program location is not in an area with an existing OASAS Youth Recovery Clubhouse (if applying for Option 1) or in areas where services proposed do not duplicate those already available.

### **6.2 Demonstration of Need**

Applicants must provide a demonstration of need and a summary of their due diligence process to ensure services do not duplicate those already available in the community.

- a) Describe how the proposal meets the requirement that implementation focuses on communities within New York's Economic Development Regions where youth and young adults lack adequate programming and safe spaces, and the proposed communities meet one or more of the following criteria:
- Have experienced a significant traumatic community event.
  - Experience high rates of youth homelessness
  - Face significant transportation barriers, making it difficult to reach mental health care.
  - Are part of historically marginalized communities including indigenous or tribal communities with limited access to behavioral health resources.

Provide applicable data for the service area identified.

- b) Summarize process of assessment conducted of the availability of similar services within the proposed service area (e.g., reviewing service directories, community mapping, engage stakeholders, consulting local agencies, or reviewing reports on local needs and services).
- c) Summarize findings to determined that the proposed Youth Safe Spaces Program addresses an unmet need and complements existing resources and avoids redundancy.

### **6.3 Program Description**

- a) Describe a plan to conduct the youth-led needs assessment within the first three months of program implementation in collaboration with youth participants and how this will be repeated annually to evaluate and address evolving needs. Include a process for analyzing data, integrating findings into program enhancements, and sharing outcomes with stakeholders.

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- b) Describe the proposed Safe Space, square footage, and physical space/layout. Be as specific as possible and include information about when the space was built, when it was last updated, renovated, or otherwise improved. Include any other pertinent physical characteristics of the site. Attach/upload floor plans, identifying areas where the required services will be provided. Describe the location of the Youth Safe Spaces Program within the community, including public transportation routes and proximity to other community spaces.
- c) Explain how each service will be implemented, including off-site offerings and estimated unduplicated youth participation. Detail specific activities and specific staffing.

**Table 5- Required Service Components**

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Essential Needs<br>**Option 1 Only                     | Provide Wi-Fi, food resources**, transportation support**, phone charging stations, and computers.  |
| Essential Needs  | Provide laundry and shower  |
| Mental Health Supports                                 | Non-clinical mental health support, peer-led workshops, meditation/health/wellness groups, support groups, suicide prevention programming, etc. |
| Referrals & Linkages                                   | Partnerships to support youth-initiated referrals, supports suggested by staff.   |
| Community Workshops & Forums                           | Workshops, forums, and training for youth, adult allies, and community leaders.   |
| Recreational Activities                                | Sports, arts, and cultural activities for social interaction, community building, respite and personal growth.                                  |
| Work Readiness, and Education Support* (Option 1 Only) | Career and personal passion exploration, peer credentialing, resume-building workshops, leadership development, and educational support.        |
| Skill-Building Workshops* (Option 1 Only)              | Workshops on social skill development, advocacy, mental wellness, Social Emotional Learning (SEL), Substance Use Disorder (SUD) prevention.     |

- d) Describe how your program will clearly promote openness, comfort, social connections, and safety, plus define areas within the Youth Safe Space to support developmentally

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appropriate programming for youth (ages 12-17) and young adults (ages 18-24.)  
Highlight any modifications for the service provisions based on age range of participants.

- e) What components or services are already funded and provided under current funding sources? Detail how these funds will be used for enhancement or addition with specifics on how this meets the service requirements.
- f) Describe how Youth Safe Spaces will offer hours that accommodate the varied needs of young people, including evenings and weekends. Programs must adjust for seasonal changes and provide consistent programming during school breaks to ensure uninterrupted support throughout the year.
- g) For locations where the existing youth-serving space is prohibited from remaining open on this schedule (e.g., libraries or schools), describe why, what efforts have been taken to address this prohibition, and what alternative arrangements will be able to ensure access during these periods.
- h) Describe initial and ongoing marketing and strategic outreach methods that will be used to inform the community and referral sources about the program as well as identify, reach, and enroll participants.
- i) Describe enrollment processes that are low-barrier, welcoming, youth-centered, and transparent.
- j) Describe the structure of youth leadership within the program, including the development of a rotating Peer Advisory Board. Explain how youth will co-design and lead initiatives, and detail strategies for incorporating youth voices into decision-making.
- k) Describe strategies for the provision of transportation supports to ensure accessibility. Note that a minimum of 2% of the budget must be allocated to transportation supports.
- l) Describe strategies for the provision of food resources, including proposed food availability and proposed partnerships to ensure availability in alignment with guidance in Section 5.3. Note that a minimum of 2% of the budget must be allocated to food resources.
- m) Explain how the program will identify and assess mental health risks, including suicide risks, and provide ongoing check-ins and goal settings.
- n) Describe how the agency will proactively prepare for and advocate for the safety and wellness of participants & staff during behavioral health crises.
- o) Explain how the program will facilitate linkages, self-referrals, & connections to community services and supports once participants age out of Youth Safe Spaces Program.

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- p) Outline training plans responsive to the needs of the population, including evidence-based approaches like motivational interviewing, youth-guided practices, safety planning, anti-violence, LGBTQ+ affirming care, Teen-Intervene, and/or non-clinical suicide prevention screening tools, etc.

### **6.4 Implementation**

- a) Provide a detailed staffing plan, including roles, required skills, and experience levels and address how peer supervision will be conducted if the Program Manager lacks that experience. Include timelines for recruitment, hiring, and onboarding.
- b) Provide a plan to conduct appropriate background checks for staff and volunteers with regular or routine contact with program participants, particularly minors.
- c) Describe how agency, including leadership, will support the staffing of the program and what strategies will be used to retain staff.
- d) Outline implementation steps and timeline to ensure full operational capacity by the third quarter and define metrics for measuring success during this phase. Include securing a program location, hiring and training staff, and MOU finalization w/ community partners

### **6.5 Agency Performance**

- a) Provide a summary of the agency and its mission, the services provided, and the population(s) served.
- b) Provide a brief description to demonstrate the applicant having at least 5 years of experience working with underserved communities of youth and young adults 12-24 in a non-clinical setting.
- c) Describe how the proposed program will be integrated into the overall organization structure, including to whom the Program Manager will report.
- d) Outline your internal and external networks, including non-clinical youth supports, local peer programs, behavioral health, and other providers, and how you plan to utilize those networks to facilitate rapid access to care. Include plans to formalize Memoranda of Understanding with community partners and include timeframes in your description.
- e) Describe how you will partner with a minimum of 1 Behavioral Health Provider per Section 5.2 and include a letter of support agreeing to establish an MOU. Describe the proposed referral pathway and collaboration with this provider.



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### **6.6 Reporting and Quality Improvement**

- a) State the program's commitment to participating in planning, reporting, and learning collaborative meetings with OMH.
- b) Describe the program's plan for tracking and analyzing qualitative and quantitative data to assess performance and support program improvements. Outline confidentiality safeguards, self-monitoring strategies, and incident management processes.
- c) What processes will be implemented to track the use of funds and ensure that they are allocated exclusively for enhancements or new services, rather than supplanting existing activities?

### **6.7 Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) and Recipient Input**

This section describes the commitment of the entity to advancing DEIB principles through agency action. 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

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- Efforts to adequately engage underserved individuals and families, including New Americans, in the project's catchment area as identified in 4.3.1.
- 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). Ensure to include impact data.
- 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. Outline how the organization will train staff on how to incorporate principles of peer support and positive youth development into their interactions with community members and programming efforts.

### **Language Access**

- h) Describe efforts to meet the language access needs of the clients served by this project (limited English proficient, Hard of Hearing (HOH) /Deaf). 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 (e.g., phone, in-person, video/remote 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**

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- 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.

## **6.8 Financial Assessment**

- a) The proposal must include a 5-year Budget (Appendix B). \$500,000 is available annually for Option 1 and \$250,000 is available annually for Option 2. The indirect cost/administrative overhead rate is capped at 15%. A minimum of 2% of the budget must be allocated to food resources, and a minimum of 2% must be allocated to transportation supports. 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) Using the Budget Narrative section of the Proposal Submission Template, describe how your agency manages its operating budget. Also, applicants must 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 adequate to attract and retain qualified employees.