

Request for Information
SCALING FOR TRANSITIONAL CARE



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Request for Information

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES CABINET

KIM JANEY, MAYOR

MARTY MARTINEZ, CHIEF OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION:

RESPONSE DEADLINE: MONDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2021 @ 5PM BOSTON LOCAL TIME

1. Overview	1
1. Purpose	
2. Context	
2. Responses	2
1. The Experience You Bring	
2. The Capacity You Have	
3. The Support You Need	
3. Details	3
1. RFI Contact	
2. Timeline	
3. Response Format	
4. Appendix	4

1. OVERVIEW

1.1 Purpose

The City of Boston is seeking to recruit potential providers who can support 24/7 wrap-around services - including housing and case management - for unsheltered individuals with substance use or mental health disorders. We are looking to connect with service providers who have the experience and capacity to bring their services to Boston in the next 45 to 60 days to staff and program low threshold transitional housing and stabilization models. These models may include:

1. Transitional housing -- For the purposes of this RFI, this housing is short-term, typically less than 6 months. Supportive services assist individuals with accessing behavioral health care, maintaining their housing, and preparing for a permanent placement.
2. Overnight respite/low-threshold shelter -- Shelters that are low-threshold for individuals with a substance use disorder – otherwise referred to as overnight respite - allow individuals to bring in harm reduction supplies, allow individuals to leave and return during the night, and have clinical expertise for supporting the needs of individuals with a substance use disorder.
3. Sobering center -- Sobering centers provide up to 24 hours of medical monitoring for individuals with acute mental health or substance use needs and help individuals connect to the next level of care

Potential partners do not need to have experience with all elements of these service models and can specialize in one or several types of service areas. We encourage service providers to think critically and creatively about the services that they offer, and how they could best partner with other organizations to provide low-threshold services.

Information collected through this RFI will inform a subsequent Request for Proposals (RFP) to contract with providers to do this work.

1.2 Context

The Mayor's Office of Recovery Services (ORS), launched in 2015, is the first municipal recovery office in the United States. ORS and the Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) use a highly collaborative and localized approach to substance use and addiction. Through ORS and BPHC, we offer harm reduction services, Narcan and overdose prevention programming, treatment referral programs and more. We work closely across City of

Boston departments, and community partners to serve our neighbors experiencing addiction and homelessness.

After 20 months serving some of our most vulnerable residents during the COVID-19 pandemic, many of our partners do not have the capacity to expand their work. With this RFI, we hope to gain information about potential new partners that can help us serve these neighbors by giving them a safe alternative to the street, providing exceptional transitional care, and connecting them to further treatment and housing resources.

While Massachusetts Avenue & Melnea Cass Boulevard has been the most visible epicenter of the region's housing and opioid crisis, these challenges span all cities and towns in the Commonwealth. In 2020, the United States had the highest rates of overdose deaths on record, surpassing 93,000 individuals. Massachusetts observed a 5% increase in opioid-related overdoses, the first increase in annual opioid-related deaths in three years. Black residents saw a 70% increase, reflecting the disproportionate toll of the pandemic in communities of color. The 245 individuals lost to an overdose in Boston made up 12% of the State's overall overdose deaths. Not only has COVID impacted the needs of individuals who use drugs, but it has also impacted the drug supply. Fentanyl remains the key factor in overdoses reported, present in 92% of fatal overdose related toxicology screens in Massachusetts in 2020.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many systems of care - including treatment, mental health, shelter, and re-entry systems - decreased their capacity to care for individuals navigating homelessness, substance use disorder, and mental health challenges. Meanwhile, providers in Mass & Cass - including hospitals, opioid treatment programs, shelters, and street outreach teams - continued delivering critical, life-saving services to those in need. The growth in the number of individuals living in encampments in unsafe conditions in the area reflects the gaps of many upstream systems in meeting their needs.

The encampments present significant public health, infectious disease, public safety, sanitation and fire safety challenges for unsheltered people, outreach workers, and first responders. To promote public health, public safety, and quality of life, the City has developed new strategies to meet the needs of individuals in the encampments and to stem the tide of individuals onto the street, such as:

- Launching a rental relief and foreclosure prevention fund,
- Transforming the street outreach team to meet individuals' complex needs by integrating recovery workers with nurses, psychiatrists, and housing navigators
- Crafting an [encampment protocol](#) that requires the City to offer shelter, treatment, and storage.

- Partnering with the State to create pathways into Housing First units for unsheltered people with substance use disorders

With winter approaching and the public health and public safety risks on the street growing, the encampments have become increasingly unsafe places to live. The greater volume, complexity, and acuity of need on the street also comes at a time of widespread staffing challenges in the behavioral health workforce. These twin realities have made it difficult to staff new services to meet the need. As we equitably recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, we are committed to serving our neighbors with compassionate, expert care. We need your help to do that.

2. RESPONSES

In your response to this Request for Information, we are interested in knowing about your experience, capacity and what you will need from the City to be successful.

Please note that this RFI is for informational purposes only. While responses may help shape a future RFP, responding to this is not a guarantee of a contract or award in the future. A vendor's response to the RFI will have no impact on the evaluation of responses to any subsequent RFP.

Please Note that all responses will be public record. **Do not submit confidential information in your response.**

2.1 The Experience You Bring

Tell us about your organization's experience in providing this work. This may include answering the following questions in no more than one or two paragraphs:

- How long has your organization been working in harm reduction and recovery services and supporting homeless individuals?
- Do you currently operate transitional housing, drop in services or sobering center programs or similar services in Boston or in the region?
- If not in New England, do you provide these services elsewhere?
- Are you a licensed treatment provider and/or currently have active contracts with the MA Department of Public Health or the City of Boston?
- What experience do you have working with syringe access and drug user health programs?

Please tell us about which populations you target with your services.

2.2 The Capacity You Have

Please describe for us what your vision and capacity is for providing services in a low-threshold housing or stabilization space in Boston. Your model may involve working alongside other types of service providers. For example -

- What level of services could you provide in Boston for low-threshold housing, overnight respite, or stabilization? How would your model be tailored to serve individuals with complex needs related to trauma, substance use, and mental illness?
- What would your staffing capacity be?
- Would you be partnering with any other hospitals, community health centers, or other community providers to deliver these services?
- If you are not local to Boston, do you operate any housing services that could serve individuals from Boston with ties to your region?

2.3 The Support You Need

Given your experience, we would like to understand the support you would need from the City to be successful at implementing your vision. We encourage you to think creatively about your vision -- and about what kinds of collaboration would help make it possible. For example -

- What other types of providers would it be most helpful for you to partner with in order to deliver these services?
- Would you be willing to provide these services on a contract for 3 months? 6 months? One year? Longer?
- What support in attaining or expanding licensing would you need?
- What resources and capabilities (in terms of programming, staffing, expertise, and facilities) would you need from the City or another partner organization to be successful? What other elements of collaboration with the City would be of value?
- Do you already have access to a facility in Boston where you would provide these services? Or would you need to be paired with an available facility?
- What challenges have you faced in the past with expanding services to clients who use drugs?

3. DETAILS

3.1 RFI Contact

For any questions about this Request for Information, your principal point of contact with the City will be:

Name: Natalie Swartz

Email Address: natalie.swartz@boston.gov

Phone Number: 617-534-3598

This RFI can be found at www.boston.gov/news. Any updates to the RFI will also be posted on that page.

3.2 RFI Timeline

RFI Release Date:	Wednesday, November 10, 2021
Questions due to the RFI Contact	Wednesday, November 17, 2021
Answers Posted on RFI Webpage	Thursday, November 18, 2021
RFI Responses Are Due	Monday, November 22, 2021

3.3 RFI Response Format

Please submit your response to this RFI via email to natalie.swartz@boston.gov by **5pm Boston local time on Monday, November 22nd**. Within the email please use the following format in the subject line: “**(Respondent Organization’s Name) - Response to Scaling Transitional Care RFI**.”

Responses can be in any format that the respondent believes best captures their ideas, plans or other information they believe is important.

3.4 Confidentiality

The City of Boston is subject to public records laws and it must comply with associated obligations. [A Guide to the Massachusetts Public Records Law is available here](#). Your response will be public record.

If respondents do not wish to provide certain components of the requested information, please share as much information as can be provided.