



Request for Proposal

Future Shapers: Fatherhood Community Initiative

By investing in fathers, we plant seeds of equity, joy, and opportunity that blossom across generations.

The Bureau of Child Adolescent and Family Health
Division of Healthy Start Systems
Father Friendly Initiative

August 8th, 2025

Overview

The Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) is the local public health department for the City of Boston. BPHC's mission envisions a thriving Boston where all residents live healthy, fulfilling lives free of racism, poverty, violence, and other systems of oppression.

Research consistently shows that fathers play a vital role in child development, family stability, and community well-being. When fathers are actively engaged, children are more likely to succeed academically, avoid risky behaviors in adolescence, and develop strong emotional bonds (Sarkadi et al., 2008; Cabrera et al., 2008). National data also indicate that children with involved fathers are twice as likely to attend college and 80% less likely to spend time in jail (National Fatherhood Initiative, 2022). Yet significant racial and economic disparities often hinder many fathers—especially Black, Latino, and low-income men in Greater Boston—from participating fully in their children's lives due to systemic barriers such as poverty, discrimination, and punitive policies (Boston Indicators & American Institute for Boys and Men, 2025). Investing in father engagement is not only a strategy for improving child and family outcomes but also a critical public health and equity priority that strengthens entire communities (CDC, 2021; Fatherhood Research and Practice Network, 2018).

In Boston, the challenge is even more pronounced – **nearly half (48%) of all children in the city are being raised without both a mother and father in the home (MA Family Institute, 2023)**. Black male adults in Boston face a disproportionate burden of behavioral health challenges driven by systemic inequities such as structural racism (Bailey et al., 2021), economic marginalization (Assari, 2020), community violence (Kajeepet, 2021), incarceration (Alang et al., 2020), and limited access to culturally responsive mental health care (Williams et al., 2021). BPHC looks to improve and develop innovative existing or new projects focused on lifting up fathers and fatherhood in the City of Boston.

BPHC is committed to contracting with a diverse group of businesses, particularly those often underrepresented in government contracting. As part of your application, please indicate if your business is one of the following: Minority-owned (MBE), Women owned (WBE), Veteran-owned (VBE), Service-disabled Veteran-owned (SDVOBE), Disability-owned (DOBE), Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender owned (LGBTBE), or a Local business (within City of Boston). If your business is a Certified Under-represented Business Enterprise (CUBE) in any of these areas, please attach documentation of certification. Additionally, BPHC looks to partner with community-led organizations that can demonstrate a historic commitment to combating health inequity in Boston.

All service contracts awarded by the Boston Public Health Commission may be subject to following the City of Boston's living wage ordinance. This ordinance requires that all employees working on sizable city contracts earn an hourly wage that is enough for a family of four to live at or above the federal poverty level. This wage amount called the living wage, is recalculated every year. For more information, please visit <https://www.boston.gov/worker-empowerment/living-wage-division>.

Background

Effective fatherhood engagement can profoundly benefit children’s well-being. Research shows that children with actively involved fathers have better academic performance and social outcomes (e.g. higher odds of college, stable employment, lower rates of teen pregnancy and incarceration) (Hoag Hospital Foundation, How the Melinda Hoag Smith Center for Healthy Living Is Helping Latino Fathers Reconnect, 2025). Additionally, fathers from historically marginalized communities often face unique barriers – from systemic challenges (e.g. housing or employment discrimination) to cultural stigmas around seeking help.

For instance, one comprehensive analysis of over 100 studies found that having a caring father was strongly linked to children’s happiness and social success. Fathers tend to engage in play and communication styles that complement mothers’ approaches – often encouraging more independence, risk-taking (early childhood), and problem-solving during play. In fact, infants and toddlers with involved fathers are more likely to be securely attached, exploring their world with enthusiasm and developing a positive, independent outlook (Building Blocks for Father Involvement, 2024). Father involvement also correlates with better mental health outcomes for children and adolescents. Studies indicate that girls with involved fathers have fewer psychological issues and lower rates of depression, while boys show reduced behavior problems and delinquency (The Importance of Fathers in the Healthy Development of Children, DHHS, 2025; Opondo, C., Redshaw, M., & Quigley, M. A., 2017)

Recent Boston-based data highlights the need for urgent, targeted intervention. According to the *Health of Boston: Mental Health 2024 Report*, Black men in Boston are less likely to access outpatient mental health services and more likely to rely on emergency departments for crisis care, suggesting limited access to preventive or ongoing mental health support (Boston Public Health Commission, 2024b). Black adults in Boston report lower levels of perceived mental well-being and higher levels of psychological distress, with Black men facing intersecting stigma related to both mental health and masculinity norms (Boston Public Health Commission, 2024b). The *Boston Live Long and Well Agenda* identifies Black men as a population disproportionately impacted by community violence and trauma, both of which are key drivers of long-term mental health issues (Boston Public Health Commission, 2024c).

Based on this data, this RFP aims to support community-embedded programming to invest in fathers – particularly fathers from historically marginalized communities - that promote child/father involvement, cultural inclusion, and emotional wellbeing.

RFP Timeline

August 8th, 2025	RFP posted on The Boston Globe
August 8th, 2025	RFP available online at: https://www.boston.gov/rfp
August 15th, 2025	RFP questions due via email by 5:00pm EST Send questions via email to: RFR@bphc.org Subject: Future Shapers: Fatherhood Community Initiative
August 22nd, 2025	Responses to questions available for viewing at https://www.boston.gov/rfp by 5:00pm EST

September 5th, 2025	<p>Proposals due via email by 5:00 PM EST</p> <p>Send proposals via email to: RFR@bphc.org</p> <p>Subject: Future Shapers: Fatherhood Community Initiative</p> <p>NO EXCEPTIONS TO THIS DEADLINE</p>
Sept. 8 th to 11 th , 2025	<p>Interviews with applicants as needed.</p> <p>Subject to change</p>
Sept. 15, 2025	<p>Notification of Decision: Selected candidate/s will be notified of award by 5:00pm EST</p> <p>The desired date for notification of award to the vendor. This date may be extended without notice. The contract resulting from this RFP shall be in effect when all necessary documentation is fully executed by both parties.</p> <p>Subject to change</p>
Oct. 1, 2025	<p>Anticipated start of contract</p> <p>Subject to change</p>

Scope of Service

Introduction

The Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) prioritizes the promotion of racial justice and health equity, consistent with its vision of a thriving Boston where all residents live healthy, fulfilling lives free of racism, poverty, violence, and other systems of oppression. This Request for Proposals (RFP) supports that mission by addressing fatherhood in Boston through the development and delivery of culturally responsive, community-based services. This funding opportunity will fund two small organizations/community groups (to be supported by a mentor agency), who wish to expand their fatherhood activities. Organizations will receive approximately \$30,000 to complete project activities.

Project Objectives

This RFP seeks qualified organizations or vendors to partner with BPHC to enhance father engagement, especially among fathers from historically marginalized communities, and, by doing so, improve outcomes for children, families, and communities. Drawing on extensive research linking active father involvement to children’s mental health and social success (Flouri & Buchanan, 2003; Sarkadi et al., 2008), this project seeks to:

- 1. Increase Father Involvement:** Facilitate sustained, meaningful involvement of fathers in their children’s lives, recognizing that engaged fathers contribute to fewer psychological issues in daughters and reduced behavioral problems and delinquency in sons (Flouri & Buchanan, 2003; Carlson, 2006). Or provide

2. Improve Mental Health: Reduce rates of depression, anxiety, and behavioral challenges among children and adolescents by strengthening paternal engagement, consistent with global findings that high father involvement lowers the risk of depression by as much as 70% (Yang et al., 2024).

3. Advance Equity for Fathers: Address systemic barriers—including employment discrimination, housing instability, and cultural stigmas around seeking help—while acknowledging that these barriers disproportionately affect Black fathers and fathers from marginalized groups (Brightpoint, n.d.; Hoag Hospital Foundation, n.d.), ensuring these fathers have equitable opportunities to thrive as caregivers.

4. Strengthen Family and Community Well-being: Promote positive father-child relationships that lay the foundation for improved academic performance, lower teen pregnancy rates, higher educational attainment, and reduced involvement with the justice system (National Fatherhood Initiative, 2022).

Required And Allowable Services

The selected organizations will be responsible for delivering a comprehensive, culturally responsive fatherhood engagement program that directly supports fathers, especially those belonging to historically marginalized communities, with the goal of improving father involvement and advancing child and family well-being. At minimum, services must include:

- 1. Father Engagement Programming.** Organizations must design and implement a series of activities that strengthen father-child relationships and increase fathers' active participation in their children's lives. These activities must be inclusive of all child age groups (infancy through adolescence) and culturally tailored for families. *Examples include father-child bonding events, literacy initiatives (e.g., reading circles, book distributions), and educational workshops.*
- 2. Father-Friendly Environment & Promotion.** Organizations must create more welcoming, inclusive, and father-friendly spaces that encourage engagement or to develop targeted outreach and promotional campaigns to raise awareness of fatherhood programming and normalize fathers' participation in supportive services. *Examples include redesigning waiting or intake areas to be more inviting to fathers, adding culturally relevant materials, or training front-line staff to better engage fathers.*
- 3. Address Social Determinants of Health.** Organizations must incorporate components that address determinants such as economic stability, housing, and legal issues that impact fathers. *Examples include employment readiness or financial literacy sessions, housing assistance navigation, legal aid to support fathers in areas such as custody or child support modifications.*
- 4. Data Collection and Evaluation.** Organizations must develop an evaluation plan that measures key outcomes and must collect qualitative success stories that illustrate program impact. Metrics can include the number of fathers engaged and retained in services, improvements in fathers' parenting skills and confidence, father-reported changes in child engagement frequency, and/or progress in social determinants (e.g., job placements, educational enrollment,

housing stability).

5. **Capacity Building and Sustainability Planning.** Each selected agency will be paired with one Mentor agency to guide implementation, problem-solve challenges, and build long-term capacity. Organizations must participate in quarterly learning collaboratives with their mentor agency and other agencies to share strategies, challenges, and best practices. Organizations must also develop internal capacity (e.g., staff trained in father engagement, culturally responsive practices) to sustain aspects of the work beyond the grant period.

6. **Additional Requirements**

- Agencies must demonstrate experience working with historically marginalized communities and addressing systemic inequities.
- Services must be delivered in welcoming, father-friendly environments (community-based, agency-based, or hybrid).
- Where possible, agencies should leverage partnerships (e.g., local barbershops, faith institutions, workforce programs) to enhance reach and impact.

Anticipated Time Period	Anticipated Activities
October 1 – October 31, 2025	Program Planning & Design: Mentor and Mentee agencies finalize partnership agreements (work plans, schedules for monthly meetings, and responsibilities). Agencies participate in a kickoff orientation with BPHC covering expectations, data reporting, equity goals, administrative requirements and development of the quarterly learning collaborative. Mentee agencies complete initial program design — selecting father engagement activities, developing outreach plans, and identifying partnership needs (e.g., legal aid, housing resources). Mentor agencies help mentees refine these plans and establish tools for tracking outcomes.
November 1st – December 31, 2025	Capacity Building & Training: Mentor agencies provide initial technical assistance sessions & internal training access to mentee staff. Mentees send staff to these trainings (father engagement, culturally responsive outreach, or evaluation basics). Agencies set up or test data collection systems (baseline measures, pre-program surveys if applicable). Organizations begin initial outreach to fathers (flyers, partnerships with barbershops, schools, churches, housing sites). Organizations begin recruitment of stipended father champions.
January 1 – March 31, 2026	Program Launch & Early Implementation: Mentee agencies begin a full rollout of father engagement activities (events, groups, literacy nights, etc.). Mentor agencies continue monthly mentorship meetings with mentees to troubleshoot, review outreach results, and adjust strategies. BPHC will conduct the first quarterly contract review meeting (January) with each Mentor-Mentee pair.
April 1 – June 30, 2026	Program Expansion & Continuous Improvement: Agencies build on early activities, expanding outreach, diversifying programming, or adding new partners (legal, workforce, mental health). Mentor agencies

	provide more targeted TA based on needs that surfaced in early implementation (e.g., engaging fathers with older teens, supporting fathers facing housing insecurity). BPHC will host the second quarterly contract review meeting (April). Agencies continue to participate in quarterly learning collaborative convened by BPHC, sharing emerging lessons and best practices with other grantees.
July 1 – August 15, 2026	Sustaining Efforts & Collecting Outcomes: Agencies continue program delivery, while emphasizing collecting outcome data and qualitative success stories from fathers and families. Mentor agencies help mentees finalize short case studies or impact narratives. Conduct final monthly mentor-mentee meetings to solidify lessons learned and draft sustainability plans (e.g., maintaining partnerships or training after the grant).
August 15 – August 31, 2026	Closeout & Final Reporting: Agencies prepare and submit final reports to BPHC (i.e. Number of fathers engaged & retained, Pre/post changes in father confidence or family well-being, Economic/housing/education milestones, Success stories and qualitative impact. BPHC holds the final quarterly contract review & closeout session (August) to document outcomes, identify technical assistance needs for the future.

Minimum Qualifications

Qualified Applicants must meet the following requirements:

1. **Experience:** Applicants must have demonstrated experience in community engagement in the City of Boston, particularly those focused on men of color, economically disenfranchised or other historically marginalized populations. Preference will be given to organizations with a track record of successful partnerships with other community-based institutions such as barbershops, faith organizations, fatherhood programs, or culturally specific support networks. Applicants must also be able to demonstrate on the ground knowledge of Boston and Boston presence to as full an extent as possible.
2. **Approach.** The vendor’s approach must be evidence-informed and aligned with current best practices in community healing and behavioral health; Behaviorally appropriate and tailored to the lived experiences of fathers in Boston; Racially just, trauma-informed, and culturally informed and culturally humble, reflecting the importance of identity, history, and community; Effective in building rapport and trust among fathers, with attention to institutional distrust, masculinity norms, and mental health stigma and rooted in a thorough understanding of Boston’s landscape, including the social dynamics that affect marginalized communities in Boston.
3. **Understanding of Health Contexts.** Vendors must demonstrate familiarity with the social determinants of health, including how housing, employment, violence, racism, and economic inequities impact behavioral health. Vendors must also demonstrate familiarity with health disparities and equity concepts, including community-level strategies to reduce barriers to care and improve population-level well-being.
4. **Sustainability.** The vendor must propose a sustainable and inclusive model that is designed to persist beyond the initial BPHC funding. The vendor should include clear strategies for internal oversight and quality assurance, such as regular supervision, coaching for community

ambassadors/fathers, and mechanisms for feedback and adaptation. Lastly, the vendor should articulate a plan for capacity building within their institution to support institutionalization of fatherhood programming within existing community infrastructures.

Proposal Requirements

Proposal sections (scored) should include (in this order):

Applicants must submit a complete proposal with the following scored sections, attachments, and unscored supplemental materials in the order listed below.

1. Cover Page with Abstract (1 paragraph max) Provide the following:

- Name and contact information for the lead project contact (name, title, agency, email).
- Title of the project.
- Names of participating organization(s), if applicable.
- Total budget request.
- A concise abstract (maximum one paragraph) summarizing the key activities, primary objectives, and proposed model. Include brief mention of implementation and intended community impact.

2. Organizational Experience (2 pages max) Describe your organization's preparedness to lead and implement this initiative. This section should include:

- Relevant experience designing, launching, or supporting culturally responsive programming especially for historically marginalized communities.
- Alignment with the qualifications outlined in the Minimum Qualifications section, including staff expertise and experience with community engagement (if applicable).

3. Understanding of Need (1 page max) Provide a description of the population to be served: fathers residing in Boston. Include:

- Demographic and community context, including systemic and structural barriers to physical/mental health care.
- Justification of the need for equitable, culturally grounded programming for fathers.
- Use of Boston-specific behavioral health data to support the rationale for fatherhood programming.

4. Description of Services (2 pages max) Present your proposed model, which must include:

- A defined approach for recruiting and supporting program activities
- A basic workplan for launching programming at culturally relevant sites (e.g., barbershops, faith-based institutions, libraries, fatherhood centers, schools). This plan may be adapted after the award announcement.
- Rationale behind your approach, including cultural humility, trauma-informed practices, and community trust-building.
- Anticipated reach, type and frequency of engagement, and intended outcomes related to peer support, emotional wellness, and stigma reduction.

5. Equity in Selection (2 pages max, if applicable) If applicable, describe how equity is incorporated into your internal operations. This includes:

- Commitment to fatherhood programming targeted to those communities which are disproportionately impacted by racial and social inequity.

6. Evaluation Approach (2 pages max) Outline your strategy for ongoing program monitoring and evaluation. This should include:

- Methods for collecting demographic and engagement data. This should include a description of the ability to collect, track and report on demographic data related to who are involved, enrolled, or otherwise engaged in programing. Demographic data should include, to the best of the vendor’s ability: zip code, neighborhood, gender identity, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, housing status, potentially income bracket information to ensure equity focus.
- Metrics to assess effectiveness of programing, participant experience and satisfaction, and emotional wellness impact over time involved in the grant cycle.
- A plan for monthly reviews with BPHC, using feedback loops for continuous quality improvement.
- Use of qualitative and quantitative data to inform future scale and sustainability.

7. Challenges and Solutions (1 page max) Identify potential challenges to program implementation, such as ambassador turnover, participant engagement, or logistical issues. Describe:

- Mitigation strategies and contingency plans.
- Commitment to regular meetings with BPHC for technical assistance and problem-solving.

Attachments (Required)

1. Certified Underrepresented Business Enterprise (CUBE) Certification (if applicable) o If your organization is a certified CUBE vendor, submit documentation of verification.

2. Workplan Submit a detailed workplan that includes:

- Project activities, responsible personnel, timelines, and measurable outcomes.
- Milestones such as program development, launch dates, evaluation check-ins, and closeout reporting.
- Coordination with community and city partners.
- Communication and outreach activities.

3. Budget and Budget Justification Submit a detailed, itemized budget aligned with your workplan. The justification should explain each line item, including:

- Personnel/staffing
- Ambassador/father stipends
- Curriculum development and training
- Materials and supplies
- Food and beverages
- Space rental (if needed)
- Community outreach and promotional efforts
- Indirect costs (capped at 10% of allowable costs)

Unscored Additional Requirements

1. CV of Key Staff Include résumés or CVs only for staff who will oversee curriculum development, training, and implementation support.

2. Business References Provide three professional references including only: name, organization, title, email, and phone number. References should be able to speak on previous partnerships on similar projects or programs.

Period of Performance

Period of Performance: The anticipated period of performance for this program is **September 1, 2025 – August 31, 2026**.

Services will be required on an as-needed basis. BPHC does not guarantee the amount of services to be performed. BPHC may extend the period of performance. This is subject to funds availability and additional work as required.

Total Budget: Up to **\$60,000** is available. Two awards will be made.

Proposal Page Limit: Proposal narrative not to exceed 11 pages (including abstract cover page), single-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman, one-inch margins. This page limit does not include cover page and requested attachments (i.e., workplan table, budget sheet and budget justification, CUBE information, CV of key staff, work sample/s, reference listing).

Selected vendors will be required to enter into the BPHC’s standard contract and complete required forms (this includes a CORI) prior to the start day of the contract.

Proposal Scoring

Proposal Section	Points
Organizational Experience	15
Understanding of the Need	15
Description of Services	10
Workplan	15
Challenges and Solutions	10
CUBE Vendor	10
Evaluation Methodology	10
Budget and Budget Justification	15
Total Points	100

Submission Instructions

Proposals must be received no later than **September 5, 2025, by 5pm EST**.

Qualified applicants to submit by email all required documents in **one** PDF file to: RFR@bphc.org

Subject of the email must contain: Future Shapers: Fatherhood Mentorship Initiative

Note: Any risks associated with the electronic transmission of responses to this RFP are assumed by the vendor.