



REQUEST FOR INFORMATION
for a
Benefits Access Centers
for The
CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

Issued by:
THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA ("City")
Office of Community Empowerment and Opportunity (OCEO)

**Responses must be received no later than 5:00 p.m. Philadelphia, PA, local time,
on Friday, April 5, 2019.**

James Kenney, Mayor
Mitchell Little, Executive Director
Office of Community Empowerment & Opportunity

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**BENEFITS ACCESS CENTERS
REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI)**

I. RESPONSE CALENDAR

Posting of RFI	Friday, March 15, 2019
Deadline for questions, requests for clarification, or requests for additional information	Friday, March 22, 2019
Response Due Date	Friday, April 5, 2019

II. RFI CONTACT INFORMATION

All questions concerning this RFI must be submitted via email no later than 5 pm on Friday, March 22nd prior to the response due date and directed to:

Sulaiman A. Wood
Office of Community Empowerment and Opportunity
Sulaiman.Wood@phila.gov

Oral responses by any City employee or agent of the City are not binding and shall not in any way be considered as a commitment by the City.

III. PURPOSE OF REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

The Office of Community Empowerment and Opportunity (OCEO) seeks to identify community-based multi-service agencies with the capacity to connect low-income individuals, at or below 125% of the Federal Poverty Line, to public benefits. It is:

- Benefits Access Center – OCEO will select one community-based multi-service agency to screen low-income Philadelphia residents, Spanish Limited English Proficiency (LEP) populations, for federal, state, and local benefits/entitlements and services for which they are eligible, and assist those individuals with successfully applying and enrolling applicants for those benefits and services. The Benefit Access Center will be provided with a screening tool, financial and programmatic support, and training from Benefits Data Trust (BDT).

This effort is part of the implementation of Shared Prosperity Philadelphia, our plan to fight poverty.

The purpose of this pre-funding request for information is to give organizations an opportunity to inform OCEO on their competencies, existing low-income client base, and any additional information that may be relevant to this effort, specifically within Spanish speaking LEP communities.

OCEO encourages all entities that may be interested in partnering with OCEO on benefits enrollment to prepare a response to this RFI in order for the City to plan and identify sufficient resources for such a project. Responses to this RFI are considered non-binding, and are used to assist the City in performing information gathering for planning purposes.

IV. ABOUT THE OFFICE OF COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND OPPORTUNITY

The mission of the Office of Community Empowerment & Opportunity (OCEO) is to increase opportunities for low income individuals, families, and communities. OCEO serves as a single point of contact and accountability for the City's anti-poverty efforts, while supporting City departments and lead agencies in meeting their yearly anti-poverty goals. OCEO also evaluates the effectiveness of anti-poverty pilots and programs and convenes stakeholders to identify opportunities for collaboration. OCEO manages the Community Service Block Grant funds (approximately \$5.6 million in calendar year 2018) and other resources.

Today, more than 1 in 4 Philadelphians lives below the federal poverty line. Thousands more struggle each month to pay for basic necessities, or to find ways to stay above water when they lose their jobs or face a health emergency. In these tough economic times and as public dollars grow scarce, we must maximize the impact of those dollars. The plan lays out a road map for focusing our priorities, and a structure for better collaboration between the City government, businesses, non-profits, and residents to address poverty in Philadelphia.

The plan focuses on five goals:

- Focus job creation and workforce development efforts for adults with the greatest barriers to employment;
- Expand access to public benefits and essential services;
- Ensure children enter school prepared and expand year-round learning opportunities;
- Increase housing security and affordability; and
- Strengthen economic security and asset building.

Learn more about the Office of Community Empowerment and Opportunity and Shared Prosperity Philadelphia by visiting <http://www.SharedProsperityPhila.org>.

V. ABOUT THE BENEFITS ENROLLMENT INITIATIVE

One of the key goals of Shared Prosperity Philadelphia is to enable residents to increase their household income by expanding access to public benefits and essential services. Too many Philadelphians do not take advantage of key public benefits. One out of every five eligible residents do not receive nutritional assistance under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or the extra cash available to the working poor under the Earned Income Tax

Credit (EITC). In addition, many of the 35,000 local residents who lost their monthly General Assistance stipend when the program was eliminated may be eligible for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, but have yet to enroll.

The objectives of this effort are to:

- Increase the percentage of eligible Philadelphians that utilizes critical federal, state, and local benefits as well as key support services;
- Conduct comprehensive screening of clients to determine their needs, and what benefits they are eligible for;
- Provide opportunities for cross-referrals, by locating benefits enrollment services within or with close ties to existing multi-service organizations to leverage the organization's infrastructure and resources, and build from the organization's established relationship with the community;
- While preserving client confidentiality and adhering to all privacy regulations, collect comprehensive data to use in a rigorous evaluation of the program. Findings are used to inform future programming.

One of the primary ways that OCEO has intended to achieve this goal is through the establishment of Benefit Access Centers in existing community sites in high need neighborhoods throughout Philadelphia. The Benefit Access Centers are housed within community-based multi-service agencies or other pre-existing high traffic agencies easily accessible to underserved low-income neighborhoods. They leverage the array of services already available within those organizations as well as the base of customers that they serve to provide additional supports to low-income residents. OCEO wants to ensure that the Benefit Access Centers have the capacity to screen individuals for eligibility for benefits and services, and offer consistent and successful access to those resources.

OCEO currently supports eight Benefits Access Centers in physical sites located in community-based multi-service agencies. These sites use trained benefits counselors to screen low-income residents for public benefits and assist residents in the application process for multiple public benefits at the same time or through repeat visits. Clients get support in applying for the benefit, including collecting and organizing the appropriate paperwork, and tracking their application through the receiving government agency to help resolve issues as they arise. OCEO provides Benefits Access Centers with a screening tool, financial and programmatic support, and training from Benefits Data Trust.

This work is supplemented by the Benefits Access Unit Mobile Office of OCEO that helps screen and enroll individuals for benefits by visiting programs and organizations on an as-needed basis. Community Legal Services supports clients of the Benefits Access Centers who are denied benefits and need further assistance with the application and enrollment process.

OCEO, community-based multi-service agencies and Benefits Data Trust will all have critical roles to play in the implementation of this effort, and to support low-income clients in successfully accessing benefits. Here is the breakdown of those roles:

City/OCEO

- Develop and implement a public awareness campaign to drive traffic to the Benefits Access Centers;
- Provide technical assistance to the community agencies in troubleshooting difficult client cases or cases where the client was declined, and help the CBO staff to navigate the bureaucracy of the agency receiving the application;
- Staff a mobile benefits access unit and mobile office that visits community-based multi-service agencies and key low-income programs for brief periods to help screen and enroll clients in public benefits;

Community-Based Multi-Service Agencies as Benefits Access Centers

- Support outreach and recruitment of clients to the Benefits Access Centers, including making referrals from other services within the agency;
- Schedule appointments for clients to be screened and enrolled in public benefits;
- Use a uniform electronic system to screen clients for public benefit eligibility, and work with them to complete their application for public benefits, including compiling and submitting the appropriate documents such as driver's license and pay stubs;
- Provide support to confirm that the client has completed their application(s) and track progress in the appropriate government system;
- Elevate cases of clients that are not being served appropriately by the state or federal benefits agency to OCEO staff and Benefits Data Trust;
- Track outcomes of application and monitor for completeness;
- Follow up with clients to ensure they recertify for their benefits when needed, including notifying clients of need for recertification, and guiding them through steps of recertification;
- Identify potential sites for mobile benefits access services, i.e. within Spanish speaking LEP locations; and
- Ensure holistic service provision that includes meaningful integration with existing programs for low-income clients, so the individual is getting the benefit of layered services.

Benefits Data Trust

- Provide the uniform tool used to screen for benefits and submitting applications for Benefits Access Centers;
- Train community agency staff in screening for benefits and successfully enrolling clients;
- Train OCEO staff on tool and assist with troubleshooting benefits applications;
- Provide technical assistance in using the screening and application tool;
- Provide "help desk" support for the tools and technical updates to the tool as needed.
- Support the development of systems at community agencies to ensure clients are supported in the recertification process, track the success of that system, and implement changes as needed
- Coordinate community agency staff efforts to ensure high performance of initiative, and strong rates of successful applications to benefits;
- Work with government agencies to simplify application processes and resolve systemwide barriers to benefits access as trends arise;
- Ensure coordination between OCEO technical assistance staff, community agency, and

- benefits enrollment staff to create seamless assistance for the customer;
- Report on activities and outcomes to OCEO;
- Identify and license a scheduling tool for community agencies to use to schedule appointments with clients, and coordinate scheduling appointments through a single telephone number for all Benefits Access Centers;
- Support outreach and identifying potential clients.

As stated above, the work should be integrated so that the handoff from one implementation partner to the next would be seamless for the client.

Key Benefits

OCEO intends for the BenePhilly initiative to provide support for applications for the following but not limited to benefits (at a minimum): Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP/Food Stamps), Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), General Assistance (GA), WIC, Unemployment Insurance, Child Tax Credit, Health Insurance (CHIP, Medicaid, Medicare), City utility assistance programs, state and municipal property tax relief benefits and LIHEAP.

Selection of Benefits Access Center

In the selection of community-based multi-service agency that could serve as benefits access centers, OCEO will consider the following elements, among others:

- Areas of high need – OCEO will focus a Benefits Access Center in areas that have high rates of poverty and low levels of enrollment as compared to need within the Spanish speaking LEP community;
- Proven Track Record – Selected organization will have a proven track record of empowering low-income Spanish speaking LEP clients and giving them the tools to stabilize their lives as well as a pre-existing stream of low-income clients that currently come to their offices;
- Providing Other Core Services - Selected organization will provide other core services that help support low-income individuals that can be layered on top of the benefits enrollment supports, such as housing counseling, affordable child care, financial literacy services, health services, etc.;
- Geographic diversity – Locations should be geographically diverse and accessible by public transportation, so that at least one location is accessible to all low-income individuals;
- Place-based strategy alignment – Some locations will align with place-based strategies that are being developed in partnership with City government. These areas include Mantua/West Philadelphia, Eastern North Philadelphia, and the 22nd Police District in North Philadelphia; and
- Demonstrate ability to meet initiative annual performance goals – The parameters of the contract for the selected agency to be fully reimbursed for its efforts are to screen and apply Philadelphia residents who have income at or below 125% of the Federal Poverty Line according to CSBG guidelines for 562 applications resulting in 352 enrollments into federal, state or municipal entitlement programs. Allowable applications are as follows (29):

Applicant screenings (19):

Child Care Information Services	Senior Property Tax Freeze
Child Health Insurance Program	Child Care Tax Credit
Medicare Extra Help	Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)
Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program	Social Security Disability Insurance
Medicaid	Social Security Income
Medicare Savings Plan	Unemployment Insurance
Programs of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly	Woman Infant Child
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)	Homestead Exemption
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families	Qualified Health Plan
Property Tax Real Estate/Rent Rebate	

Additional allowable applications not screened for (10):

PECO Customer Assistance Program
PGW Customer Responsibility Program
PWD Tiered Assistance Program including Senior Water Discount
Special Pharmaceutical Benefits Program
Tax Filings
Federal Application for Free Student Aid
Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency
Head Start/ Pre-K Counts
General Assistance

Timeline

The proposed timeline for the project is as follows:

- Request for letters of intent for Benefits Access Center - Posted Friday, March 15, 2019
- Letters of intent for Benefits Access Center – Due Friday, April 5, 2019
- Benefits Access Center selected – Friday, April 19, 2019
- Anticipated contract start date – Monday, July 1, 2019

VII. SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Benefits Access Centers

If you are interested in becoming a Benefits Access Center, please answer questions 1 – 9 below (5 Pages Maximum):

1. How do you plan to integrate benefit screening into your services?
2. Please describe how becoming a Benefits Access Center will provide value to your organization and your clients. Please describe your organization's clientele.
3. Provide a simple flow chart with description to show when and how benefit screening would occur vis a vis other services provided by the agency.
4. What challenges do you anticipate experiencing in integrating benefits screening and enrollment?

5. How will your organization engage in community outreach/promotion of services, i.e. within the Spanish speaking LEP community?
6. How many of your current clients do you anticipate will be referred for benefits screening and enrollment? Would your organization be amenable to serving the general public outside of your current client (i.e. through appointments scheduled through a hotline number)?
7. Please indicate your ability to start this work in July 2019.
8. Describe past successes you have had in connecting individuals to public benefits. Provide details on your ability to document and report on outcomes, your history of success in having clients successfully enroll for multiple benefits, your experience integrating with outside organizations to implement a program.
9. What facilities are available to accommodate a benefits access counselor? Considerations include a semi-private space, a phone line, internet connection, computer, and use of office equipment (printer, photocopier, scanner, shredder, etc.). What days per week/which hours would this space and the office be available for the counselor to see clients?

VIII. HOW TO SUBMIT

Applicants must submit their responses electronically as a single document to:

Sulaiman A. Wood
Office of Community Empowerment and Opportunity
Sulaiman.Wood@phila.gov

Responses are due by 5 pm, Friday, April 5, 2019.

IX. CONFIDENTIALITY AND PUBLIC DISCLOSURE

Applicants shall treat all information obtained from the City which is not generally available to the public as confidential and/or proprietary to the City. Applicants shall exercise all reasonable precautions to prevent any information derived from such sources from being disclosed to any other person. Applicants agree to indemnify and hold harmless the City, its officials and employees, from and against all liability, demands, claims, suits, losses, damages, causes of action, fines and judgements (including attorney's fees) resulting from any use or disclosure of such confidential and/or proprietary information by any Applicant or any person acquiring such information, directly or indirectly, from the successful Applicant.