



Request for Proposals

Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD)

Overdose Response Communications Activities

April 2025



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Request for Proposals: Overdose Response Communications

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I. Purpose and Background

The City of Baltimore, through the Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD) seeks a qualified communications and marketing vendor to design and implement a comprehensive public education and outreach campaign that supports the City's overdose response strategy.

Baltimore City continues to face a severe opioid crisis, with overdose deaths disproportionately affecting its residents. As of the first seven months of 2024, Baltimore accounted for 44% of Maryland's overdose deaths, despite comprising only 9% of the state's population.

Strategic Goal:

This campaign will support the goals of the City's Overdose Strategic Plan by:

- Increasing public awareness of overdose risks and prevention
- Reducing stigma around substance use and addiction
- Promoting harm reduction practices
- Connecting residents to resources such as naloxone, treatment, and support services

II. Scope of Work:

Campaign Development and Implementation:

The selected vendor will collaborate closely with BCHD staff, nonprofit partners, community stakeholders, and people with lived experience to:

- Develop and execute a citywide public education campaign
- Create content that is inclusive, trauma-informed, and culturally responsive
- Deliver messaging across diverse platforms and communities
- Highlight BCHD programs and services that support overdose response

Media and Outreach Channels

The campaign may include, but is not limited to:

- **Traditional Media:** Billboards, transit ads, radio/TV spots, posters, flyers
- **Digital and Social Media:** Website content, blogs, email newsletters, and platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter/X, TikTok, and YouTube
- **Collateral Materials:** Design and distribution of educational brochures, banners, toolkits, and printed/digital informational resources

The Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD) is requesting proposals for the creation and implementation of a communications plan and marketing campaign to support our opioid overdose response efforts. The budget for this plan and campaign is **\$1,300,000**.

This includes, but is not limited to:

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III. Communications Plan Development

Planning Phase:

- Conduct discovery sessions with BCHD to align on goals, messaging, and target audiences
- Develop a comprehensive communications and marketing plan that:
 - Aligns with BCHD's existing communications and branding standards
 - Includes media strategy, timelines, budget allocation, evaluation metrics, and outreach approaches
 - Covers event promotion and public engagement tactics

Strategy Development:

- Create a multi-channel communications strategy that incorporates:
 - Traditional, digital, and social media
 - Community engagement opportunities for feedback and participation
 - Materials tailored to specific community needs and demographics
- Coordinate with BCHD Public Information Officer to ensure message accuracy and alignment with the City's Overdose Strategic Plan

IV. Key Messages and Campaign Focus Areas

The campaign will focus on four primary topics. The vendor will refine, expand, and implement messaging for each:

Topic 1: Overdose Prevention

Objectives:

- Increase awareness of overdose signs and symptoms
- Promote Naloxone distribution and use of the life-saving medication
- Normalize overdose preparedness as a shared responsibility
- Increase awareness of available overdose resources in Baltimore City

Target Audiences:

- People Who Use Drugs (PWUD) and their families and friends
- Residents and employees in high-risk areas
- Youth and older adults

Key Issues:

- Low public awareness of naloxone access
- Underutilization of overdose response training

Sample Campaign Components:

- Infographics and short videos on Naloxone training
- QR codes for free Naloxone locations
- "I carry because..." testimonial series
- Harm reduction kit distribution
- Community Naloxone training events with photo/story activations

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Topic 2: Substance Use & Recovery

Objectives:

- Increase understanding of addiction and recovery
- Normalize and celebrate diverse recovery paths
- Dispel myths with fact-based education
- Increase awareness of available overdose resources in Baltimore City

Key Issues:

- Stigma and misinformation
- Lack of visibility for local treatment and recovery resources

Sample Campaign Components:

- Infographics on recovery pathways (e.g., Medication Assisted Treatment, peer support groups)
- Social media spotlights on individuals in recovery
- Community-created recovery stories (art, digital media)
- Resource maps for treatment and peer support

Topic 3: Stigma Reduction

Objectives:

- Challenge stigmatizing language and perceptions around addiction
- Empower voices with lived experiences
- Encourage help-seeking behavior

Key Issues:

- Stigma as a barrier to care
- Public misconceptions of addiction as a moral failing

Sample Campaign Components:

- Radio and social media storytelling
- Posters comparing addiction with other chronic illness
- Community panels and “Stigma Talks”
- Billboard campaigns in public spaces

Topic 4: Grief & Loss

Objectives:

- Publicly honor lives lost to overdose
- Destigmatize grief
- Provide healing and support resources
- Increase awareness of available overdose resources in Baltimore City

Key Issues:

- Shame and isolation in grieving
- Limited awareness of grief supports

Sample Campaign Components:

- “We Remember” story galleries (virtual/in-person)
- “You’re Not Alone” grief kits

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- Annual remembrance events
- Storytelling campaigns focused on healing

IV. Target Audience Customization

The populations that are experiencing the highest fatal overdose rates by demographic groups according to the CDC Wonder are: Black/African American (for race), male (for sex), and 50-59 and 60+ (for 10-year age groups). The priority population for outreach is Black/African American male residents aged 60 and above.

Vendors must demonstrate the ability to tailor messages for key priority populations:

Youth Audiences:

- Dispel myths around drugs
- Promote youth-specific resources and peer support
- Center youth voices and digital engagement

Older Adults:

- Educate on safe medication use
- Promote safe drug disposal
- Address chronic pain and mental health without stigma

V. Communication Plan Execution

1. Content Creation and Brand Execution

Objective:

Create a consistent and culturally relevant brand identity for the campaign

Requirements:

- Develop a City Overdose Response Brand Usage Guide
- Produce content that is trauma-informed, accessible, multilingual, and audience specific
- Ensure content includes visual and messaging standards across all platforms

2. Campaign Implementation

Objective:

Design and launch strategic campaigns informed by data and public health best practices

Requirements:

- Use historical and seasonal data to guide rollout calendars
- Incorporate proven methods from previous BCHD campaigns
- Include print, digital, and in-person outreach elements

3. Digital & Social Media Management

Objective:

Leverage BCHD's digital presence to maximize reach and engagement

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Requirements:

- Manage content across website and social media platforms
- Create a 12-month editorial content calendar
- Increase engagement with the public and stakeholders
- Monitor performance and adjust strategies based on analytics

4. Monitoring and Reporting

Objective:

Track and report campaign effectiveness and alignment with BCHD's strategic goals

Requirements:

- Define metrics to assess engagement, awareness, and behavior change
- Report monthly on:
 - Social media performance
 - Public engagement trends
 - Success against campaign benchmarks

5. Key Deliverables

Comprehensive Communications Plan

Includes: Research, message frameworks, audience strategies, budget, timeline, accountability matrix

Monthly Progress Reports

Track performance metrics, social media analytics, and public engagement data

Promotional Materials and Collateral

Examples:

- Social media content (posts, reels, videos)
- Printed materials (brochures, flyers, palm cards)
- Toolkits and infographics
- Traditional media ads (TV, radio, print)

6. Timeline

The project is expected to run from around September 2025 through August 2026.

RFP Release Date: April 21, 2025

Letter of Intent Submissions Deadline: May 12, 2025

Application Submissions: May 23, 2025, by 5:00 p.m.

Proposal Review Period: May 27 – 30, 2025

Final Decision/Selection: June 10, 2025

Project Anticipated Start Date: August 1, 2025

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VI. Additional Application Information

Eligibility and Contract Terms

BCHD will select and fund one (1) award through this RFP. The selected applicant will enter a contractual agreement with BCHD.

This project will be 12 months in duration, contingent upon available funding. The initial implementation period will start around September 2025 and end around August 2026.

Applicants should have the following skills and expertise.

- Demonstrated experience in development of communication and media campaigns that include web content, video, and print resources.
- Demonstrated experience in video production and editing.
- Experience developing evidence-based public health messaging with evaluation data to show impact and effectiveness.
- Experience developing campaigns that are modifiable or applicable for local context and local capacities (e.g., small community-based organization or local health department teams).
- Topical knowledge in overdose, substance use, and harm reduction is strongly preferred but not required, although alignment with the values of harm reduction should be demonstrated through the application.
- Experience working in coordination with experts and co-designing campaigns.

How to Apply

Applicants will begin the process by submitting a Letter of Intent to BCHD no later than 5:00 p.m. on May 12, 2025. Applicants will be notified of the status of their application by June 10, 2025. It is the responsibility of each applicant that all required materials are submitted by the deadline. Please note that hard copies and late submissions will not be accepted.

Step 1 – Letter of Intent: Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit a Letter of Intent to help us anticipate the number of applications and plan accordingly for the review process. Letters of Intent must be submitted via email to Blairk.Adams@BaltimoreCity.gov with the subject line [**Organization Name**] – **BCHD Overdose Response Communication RFP Letter of Intent**. Letters of Intent are due no later than 5:00 p.m. on May 12, 2025.

Step 2 – Submission of Applications: Organizations should thoroughly review this RFP and the latest [Opioid Restitution Fund updates](#) before applying. Completed applications must be submitted via email to Blair Adams at Blairk.Adams@BaltimoreCity.gov with the subject line [**Organization Name**] – **BCHD Overdose Response Communications Activities RFP**. Full applications are due by 5:00 p.m. on May 23, 2025.

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Application Requirements

1. Transmittal email: This email from the applicant organization must specify the title of the application, the applicant organization, the project director, and the funding requested.
2. Authorized signature: The cover sheet of the budget form should be completed and signed by the chief executive officer or the person responsible for conducting the affairs of the applicant organization and legally authorized to execute contracts on behalf of the applicant organization.
3. Application:
 - a. Application narratives are limited to 10 pages. You may use the pages as you see fit.
 - b. The narrative is to be single-spaced on standard 8 ½" x 11" paper with one-inch margins and using 12-point Times New Roman or Arial/Helvetica typeface. Tables and charts may use a 10-point typeface. The application pages must be numbered. The budget and budget justification are not included in the page limit. The appendices specified in the guidelines below are also excluded from the 10-page limit.
 - c. The application should be structured using these topic headings:
 - i. Table of contents (not included in the 10-page limit)
 - ii. Summary of Organization/Company History
 - iii. Organization Capacity (specific to this RFP's work needs)
 - iv. Organization Experience (relevant to this RFP's work needs)
 - v. Examples of work products
 - vi. Proposed approach and methods
 - vii. Project budget and justification Attachment A
 - viii. Appendices (not included in the 10-page limit)
 - ix. Mandatory appendices:
 1. Letters of support from prospective subcontractors/partners
 2. Résumés of key personnel (2 page maximum each)
 3. Organizational chart
 4. List of officers and Board of Directors or other governing body, if any
 5. Form 990, if the organization is required to file it
 6. Most recent financial audit
 7. Documentation of being in good standing as a business/organization with the State of Maryland
 - x. Appendices should include only the material necessary to support the application. Applications should set off each component with headings using the Roman numerals and bold-face titles below.

Application Component Ranking

- Summary of Organization/Company and its History (5 points): Exactly that. Its age, purpose, organizational structure, leadership, governing body, fields

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- of expertise and experience (on which you will expound in other sections), number of employees, how you are financed, etc.
- Organization Capacity (15 points): Identify the resources you can bring to this endeavor, including personnel (résumés of key staff will go in the appendices), facilities, technology and equipment, partners/subcontractors, etc.
 - Organization Experience (15 points): Identify your organization's high-profile project successes and previous work with the targeted communities, and list other work done related to substance use or overdose response.
 - History of working in Baltimore City with target populations and community partners (5 points): Discuss previous work like that called for in this RFP locally. Discuss the organization's history with community partners, including previous BCHD partnering.
 - Examples of work products (10 points): This could include tangible deliverables or internet links to past projects that demonstrate the quality of your work.
 - Project staffing (15 points): Identify the project director and describe their level of responsibility in the organization, qualifications to lead the project, and their role in carrying out the project. Identify any other essential staff, their roles in the project, and their relevant qualifications. (In the appendix, include résumés [maximum two pages each] for all key personnel.)
 - Proposed approach and methods (30 points): Identify and explain:
 - How you will go about identifying key target audiences, developing a Communications Plan, and implementing said plan.
 - What activities you will undertake
 - A schedule for milestones and deliverables
 - Outcomes you expect
 - Partnerships (5 points)
 - Identify the organizations or persons that will play a defined role in the project. Identify organizations' leadership.
 - Discuss the ways the partners will contribute to the project.
 - Define the role of the partners in the project. Include a description of the added capacity that they bring to the project.
 - Include letters of support from the partners in the appendix that describes the roles they agree to play.
 - Discuss the management plan for the project.
 - Describe the structure that will be put into place to ensure that the partnerships are effective.
 - Project Budget: The applicant must provide a budget for the full project period. Please note that the Budget Form will be attached to the final FRP. Applicants must use the Budget Form provided in Attachment A of the RFA when submitting their proposals.
 - Applicants must include a line-item budget narrative detailing the purpose of each budget expenditure. This form will be the actual budget that will be used for the vendor contract and requires significant attention. If an organization is seeking an indirect cost rate, it can be no greater than 10%, unless the organization already has a federal negotiated NICRA.

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- Application budgets are not scored per se, as post-award negotiations and adjustments to meet BCHD's funding constraints are anticipated.

BCHD Budget Instructions are included on Attachment A and must be followed when completing the budget.

Eligibility to Apply

This RFP is open to any nonprofit, private-for-profit, or governmental entity in good standing with the State of Maryland and with the experience and capacity to perform the work described in this RFP.

Form of the Agreement

The selected applicant will be required to enter into a contractual agreement (in a form like Attachment B: Non-Construction Consultant Agreement) with the City of Baltimore through the Baltimore City Health Department and will be subject to City of Baltimore laws, policies, regulations, and business practices. Performance is also subject to Opioid Restitution Fund requirements.

The Baltimore City Health Department reserves the rights to:

- Approve and fund parts of applications and not approve or fund other parts
- Negotiate funding levels
- Negotiate the modification or removal of project activities or methods
- Decline to approve all applicants

Applicants are expected to review language and share concerns on language with BCHD before applying.

Application Review and Selection Procedure

BCHD will select a review team including both BCHD employees and outside persons with knowledge related to overdose response efforts in Baltimore City. They will independently score each application on a scale of 0-100. Point allocations for each component are provided in parentheses in the Components section on pages 9-10. The review team will use the arithmetic mean of the reviewers' scores as the applications' scores.

The review team will then rank all proposals by score in each category area and recommend for approval and funding the highest scoring proposal. BCHD leadership will make final determinations based on negotiations with recommended applicants involving budget limitations and priorities. If an agreement cannot be reached with an approved applicant, BCHD will not select that applicant and will open negotiations with the next-highest ranking applicant. Approval and funding decisions are not subject to appeal.

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Questions from Applicants

Please email questions to Blairk.Adams@BaltimoreCity.gov before the deadline – May 23, 2025. All questions received by BCHD will be included in a master question and answer document and posted on BCHD’s website.

Baltimore City Health Department Office

Baltimore City Health Department Administrative Office is located:
1001 E. Fayette Street
Baltimore, MD 21202