



**EXPANDING THE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH WORKFORCE:  
Inventory of Programs and Policies to Enhance Recruitment and Retention**

***REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS***

**BACKGROUND**

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, along with many other states, is experiencing a crisis-level workforce shortage in behavioral health. While workforce shortages have existed for decades, the problem has increased significantly because of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated growth in the awareness of and need for services for mental health and substance use conditions for people of all ages.

The workforce shortage exists across the behavioral health care continuum from peer services in the community to outpatient clinical care to day programs to acute inpatient psychiatric and substance use care to long-term residential care. In addition to expanding the number of people in the workforce (through both recruitment and retention), the workforce needs to be more diverse, representing and reflecting the needs of the individuals and families it will serve. People of all races, ethnicities, and languages need to be able to find a provider that is a good fit for them.

In response to this long-standing workforce shortage, many federal and state public agencies and legislatures, private corporations, and philanthropic organizations have established, financed, and implemented initiatives and incentives to attract people to the field and encourage professional advancement and retention (i.e., psychiatrists, psychologists, drug and addiction counselors, social workers, mental health counselors, recovery coaches, peer supporters, etc.). However, the availability of these programs is not always well known, and barriers to participation from diverse communities may exist.

**PROJECT OVERVIEW AND COMPONENTS**

**The purpose of this project is to identify and describe current incentive and support opportunities in Massachusetts to expand the behavioral health workforce and increase the representation of individuals from racially, ethnically, and/or linguistically marginalized communities.** This will involve 1) building a comprehensive inventory of incentive and support programs for entering or advancing in the behavioral health workforce that are available to individuals residing in Massachusetts and 2) organizing the data in a manner that can be sorted and analyzed.

This inventory should include all programs related to recruitment and retention of individuals providing services and treatment for people with mental health and substance use conditions, including but not limited to the following:

- Pipeline programs (school to work)
- Apprenticeship programs at any academic or professional level
- Programs for non-clinical roles such as recovery coaches and peer support professionals
- Scholarship and loan repayment programs that are specific to behavioral health and specifically designated for Massachusetts residents

The program sponsors may be federal or state government, an academic or provider organization, private philanthropy, or another funder type. Of particular interest is to identify those programs that specifically seek to increase representation in the behavioral health care workforce from communities that are racially, ethnically, socially, or otherwise diverse and often marginalized in traditional workforce incentive, support, and development initiatives.

The project will include the following specific tasks:

- **Define the scope of the project.** Articulate inclusion and exclusion criteria for programs to be included in the inventory. These may include criteria based on provider types, financial value of the program, etc.
- **Develop a framework for collecting the data and organizing the inventory.** The framework should include both a way to categorize the programs identified and the standard data elements that will be documented for each program. Data elements may include, for example: eligible population, education level required, geographic restrictions, length of program (where applicable), and future work commitment required for program participation (where applicable).
- **Make recommendations as to how information gleaned from the inventory can be used to further enhance the behavioral health workforce.** This may include developing a more comprehensive database/directory, website, etc., and/or ways to more effectively disseminate information to current and prospective workforce participants. *Any future development of websites or other ways to make directory accessible to the public are outside the scope of the immediate project.*
- **Participate in regular oversight meetings with MAMH and other project sponsors.**

The primary audience for the inventory is potential workforce participants, who may be motivated or supported to enter or advance their careers in the behavioral health field in Massachusetts. Therefore, the inventory should include terms and be organized in a way that a layperson could generally understand.

## ELIGIBILITY

Any individual or non-governmental organization may apply for this consulting opportunity. MAMH welcomes applications from minority and women owned business entities.

## PROPOSAL COMPONENTS

Applications for this consulting opportunity are due **March 23, 2022** at 5:00 p.m. Eastern time. Responses to this RFA should include the following sections:

- **Qualifications and experience.** Applications should include a brief overview of the qualifications and relevant experience of the person or organization submitting the proposal, including any individuals who will be working on the proposal. (20%)
- **Cultural competency.** Applicants should describe how they will ensure that diverse experiences, perspectives, and knowledge of the field are integrated into all aspects of the project. (15%)
- **Proposed approach to project components described above, including a detailed timeline and workplan.** (40%)
- **Specific example of at least one prior work engagement or product** similar in scope to this project. (10%)
- **Proposed budget** for this project. The budget should be reasonable, appropriate, and feasible to complete the work proposed in the application. (15%)
- **Two professional references** who can speak to the applicant’s ability to complete this type of project. (required)

Applications should be no more than 7 pages in length (12 pt. font). The example of prior work and proposed budget are not included in the 7-page limit.

## QUESTIONS

Questions or comments related to this consulting opportunity should be directed to Jenifer Urff, MAMH Director of Knowledge Dissemination and Technical Assistance, at [jeniferurff@mamh.org](mailto:jeniferurff@mamh.org). Questions and responses will be posted daily at: <https://www.mamh.org/about/opportunities>