

Request for Qualifications

Statement of Need

The Erie Supportive Housing Project Team (Project Team) is seeking a **supportive services provider agency** to be the lead agency for providing housing and health services to roughly 150 individuals and families in 150 units in the City of Erie and throughout Erie County. The housing units will be identified through two parallel strategies:

1. Intensive, site-based services to 50 tenants of a permanent supportive housing building that houses individuals experiencing chronic homelessness in the City of Erie
2. Mobile supportive services to 100 clients to match them with 100 dedicated scattered-site units throughout Erie County. The clients will be either individuals or families with children experiencing chronic homelessness.

The Project Team is looking for a supportive service provider who will manage a dedicated, mobile team to serve the clients in all 150 units and will act as the lead agency for all programmatic needs. The units will be acquired, developed, and identified over the course of the next few years and the service agency must be prepared to scale services as new units come online.

All clients will be identified through a process known as coordinated entry managed by Erie County Care Management, which prioritizes care for people experiencing homelessness with the deepest service needs based on a data-informed vulnerability screening. It is expected that tenants will be experiencing chronic homelessness with a majority having a mental health diagnosis and/or substance use disorder.

Site-Based (1) - The permanent supportive housing multifamily building will be approximately 50 units, serving approximately 50 clients at one time. It is estimated that the building will open in Fall 2027. In the short term, the lead service agency will act as a key partner in planning the development and services delivered on-site.

The lead supportive services agency will partner with the lead developer, CHN Housing Partners, to advise on the design and location of the project and to work with Project Team members to clarify:

- The tenant selection process,
- The staffing model for services delivered on-site,
- The partnership with other service agencies, and
- The method of sustainably funding operations and supportive services.

Once the building is constructed and clients move in, the services agency will lead the on-site team to provide services on-site and through in-reach partnerships to tenants.

Scattered-Site (2) - The scattered-site programming will dedicate 100 units throughout Erie County through a campaign that acquires units and converts them to supportive housing, while also signing agreements with existing property owners to convert units to supportive housing. Recruiting the 100 units - through master lease agreements and through property acquisition -

will be the responsibility of the whole Project Team. It is expected that the first 25 units will be identified by Fall 2024 and the effort will recruit 100 units by Summer 2026.

The supportive services agency will hire and manage a multidisciplinary, mobile team of professionals to engage clients, assist them in moving into a dedicated unit, and then serve the tenants with housing-based case management, behavioral health and physical health services to ensure their housing and health stability. The services team, employing an assertive engagement approach to its trauma-informed care, will act as a broker to other systems of care in addressing basic needs, such as food, financial security, workforce development, legal, childcare, and other needs.

Project Team Information

To address the increasingly complex needs around homelessness, a robust collection of community leaders joined together in November 2022 to form the **Erie Supportive Housing Project Team (Project Team)**.

The work of the Project Team is currently funded by representatives from UPMC Hamot Health Foundation, Erie Community Foundation, and Highmark Foundation and facilitated by Wyatt Schroeder, supportive housing consultant and Principal at [BBS](#).

The work is based on the evidence-based practice called Housing First, which believes people best achieve stability when rapidly connected with stable, permanent housing and intensive supportive services.

The Project Team is a branch of [Infinite Erie](#), a community-wide investment strategy to attract public and private sector funding for transformative projects.

Project Team Member Agencies:

- Hamot Health Foundation
- Erie Community Foundation
- Highmark Health and Allegheny Health Network
- Erie County
- City of Erie
- Erie Home Team
- Housing Authority of the City of Erie
- Erie County Care Management
- Gannon University
- Mercyhurst University
- Infinite Erie

Project Team Goals:

1. Assess and understand Erie's ability to stably house and serve its most vulnerable populations experiencing homelessness.
2. Develop a permanent supportive housing building of approximately 50 units, either through a rehab or a new development, to house the 50 most vulnerable individuals experiencing chronic homelessness in the city of Erie.
3. Identify and dedicate an additional 100 units throughout Erie County to house the community's most high-risk 100 individuals and families experiencing chronic homelessness.
4. Sustainably support this work through long-term commitments, partnerships, and funding.

Project Summary

The following elements describe the current scope of the project, as defined by the partners of the Erie Supportive Housing Project Team. It is expected that the selected supportive services agency will work with the Project Team to finalize each of the below elements. The services agency will be selected for their expertise and experience in managing quality trauma-informed programming and expected to be a leading partner in deciding each element below.

The Project Team is looking for a supportive services agency partner who is committed to a Housing First approach that conforms to the expectations written below:

- A) **Population Served** – The supportive housing units will house individuals experiencing homelessness with complex service needs, as decided by the member agencies of the Erie Home Team and its coordinated entry process.

The project will prioritize chronic individuals experiencing homelessness with a disability, with the longest history of homelessness, and the most severe service needs. Prior to tenancy, the service provider will conduct a functional assessment to ensure that prospective tenants are able to complete activities of daily living.

In review of the top 70 individuals on the Erie Home Team's coordinated entry list, it was found that 63% had a SUD diagnostic history in the last decade with 87% having a mental health diagnostic history in the last decade. This history includes 76% of people experiencing major depressive disorder, 56% living with bipolar disorder, and a third having either alcohol or opioid-related dependencies. Clients moving into the supportive housing units will have experienced homelessness for 12 months or longer and will be confronted with the associated traumatic impacts of that experience. Services will be expected to be designed around these needs.

It is expected that families with children under the age of 18 will represent a small percentage (approximately 1 out of 10 cases) of the chronic homeless population in Erie. For that reason, the project will prioritize experience with adult populations.

- B) **Service Philosophy** – The program will rely on a Housing First model, prioritizing those with the deepest service needs and setting as few pre-conditions as possible on program eligibility and on the requirements to sign a permanent housing lease.

The aim is to build a deep, trusting relationship between service staff and tenants that leads to increased service engagement, especially in areas that promote recovery and psychological well-being. The services team should employ an assertive engagement approach with clients that allows for frequent interactions, at least weekly contact with all clients. The mobile team should expect to be conducting frequent community-based visits, including at home, at work, or other community sites as benefits the client. This approach may require non-traditional business hours, as the service team recommends.

It is expected that the service agency is a qualified provider of services who has experience working with marginalized populations such as people experiencing homelessness, justice-involved individuals, individuals with physical and/or mental disabilities, and other vulnerable populations. The service agency should be a leader in assertive engagement approaches of client care, harm reduction, and trauma-informed care.

The service agency should work to involve the voice of lived experience in the service planning, the service delivery, and service evaluation process. This could include the hiring of staff trained as peer specialists, stipends for participation in an advisory council, convening a tenants council, or other strategies of inclusion.

The service agency should assess and plan based on a whole person approach to care. Staff should co-create an individual service plan with the client that develops care pathways for all domains of health, including physical health, behavioral health, social health and environmental health.

The service agency will leverage models that implement SAMSHA's six principles of trauma-informed care.

The agency will work with property management (across all housing sites) on a weekly basis to ensure that the service philosophy is consistently applied to all tenants.

- C) Staffing Expectations** – The applicant will propose a staffing model, with an accompanying estimated budget, that serves the needs of the clients experiencing chronic homelessness who will be in their care. The staffing model is meant to address the housing stability, behavioral health, and physical health of the tenants. It is expected that some services will be delivered directly by the service agency team while other services will be connected through in-reach partnerships. The team will act as a broker of other system resources and manage formalized partnership that ensure access to needed care.

Staffing is expected to address the following service areas:

- a. Team Leadership – lead team and manage resources to coordinate care for clients across all partner agencies, ensure the smooth operations of services, lead consultation meetings, and act as the clinical lead.
- b. Housing-based Case Management – act as the main point of contact for clients and coordinate case management responsible for matching a client with appropriate long-term housing, individualized service planning
- c. Behavioral Health Services – address the integration with behavioral health services, including screening and assessment, brief interventions, outpatient counseling, and the care coordination for extended care based on level of care needs.

- d. Housing Specialist – determine a relationship management approach and act as the main point of contact with property management, the Housing Authority, and other housing-based needs.

- D) **Partnership to Behavioral Health and Physical Health** – The service agency should either be able to deliver mental health, drug and alcohol services, home health care, and/or physical health in-house or be able to closely partner with clinical agencies.

It is expected that the tenants will transition into housing with their existing service relationships for behavioral and physical health needs. The dedicated services team will act as a broker and care coordinator with those providers to ensure the smooth delivery of care. If tenants do not have established service relationships or are without insurance, then the services team coordinates establishment of services with a contracted partnership to deliver behavioral and physical health care to those uninsured tenants.

The in-reach partnerships should work to address needs of psychiatric care, nursing, medical monitoring, physical wellness, home health care, and recovery approaches.

- E) **Operational Budget and Revenue Sources**– The applicant is expected to provide an estimated annual budget for staffing and any associated costs in providing quality services. Budget should include the costs in serving 25 units of supportive housing, which is the scale of services for the launch phase of this project. Also include a column to demonstrate the intended costs to serve all 150 units to demonstrate the plan to scale services to meet the full capacity of this project.

Applicant's budget should articulate any revenue sources that the team would consider funding the project, including how much funding applicant would be seeking from private, philanthropic sources. And include any other considerations on needs to make the operation sustainable.

The Project Team includes representatives from private and public funders of supportive housing. The funders are expected to participate in financially supporting the revenue sources for the supportive services team. For the response to this RFQ, the Project Team wants the applicant to contemplate other sources that may be available.

The Project Team fully understands that the final, approved budget may differ from the estimated budget in the submission. The budget in the response to this RFQ is meant to spark conversation and illustrate the applicant's approach to supportive services staffing.

It is expected that the service provider has familiarity and experience with public sources and compliance, including work with Erie County Human Services, U.S. HUD, SAMSHA, City of Erie, Medicaid, and other funding support.

- F) **Services Contract** – The selected services agency will sign a contract, as negotiated with the service agency and the backbone agency representing the Project Team. The contract

will be put out to bid at the end of the contract term. The Project Team, or its appointed organizational representative, will hold the awarded service agency accountable to the performance of the contract and successful client outcomes.

- G) Mobile Operations and On-Site Space** – The services team is expected to provide a plan for delivering consistent mobile service to the supportive housing units. Once the single-site building is developed, there will be on-site, dedicated space for the services team. This is not expected to open until at least Fall 2027. Therefore, the lead service agency will be responsible for identifying office space for the mobile services team.
- H) Property Management and Housing Operations** – The lead service agency is not expected to function as a property manager or housing operator for the supportive housing units. The services team will work intimately with the established property managers to onboard them to the program, educate them on Housing First and the service array, and manage the relationship with property management intentionally and transparently. If the services agency is interested in also serving as a property manager for select supportive housing sites, then that will be negotiated with the Project Team after the supportive services contract is formally awarded.
- I) Rental Assistance** – The Project Team, in close partnership with the Housing Authority of the City of Erie, will work to identify a sustainable source of rental assistance for all tenants in the supportive housing units. The lead service agency will be an active partner with the Housing Authority of the City of Erie in working with the source of rental assistance, including complying with program requirements, documentation, and reporting.

The tenants will sign a lease with the property and be expected to pay the required amount of rent. Rental levels are expected to conform with [U.S. HUD's Fair Market Rent](#) levels, so that the unit is eligible for federal subsidies and rental assistance.

Anticipated Project Timeline

In response to this RFQ, use the following table to estimate a project timeline. A few of the dates have been filled in to aid your planning. To maximize clarity, you are encouraged to add or subtract elements in the table:

Estimated Project Timeline

Program Element	Estimated Completion Date
PLANNING PHASE	
Select Lead Developer for Single-Site Building	June 2023
Select Lead Service Agency (this RFQ)	January 2024
Hosting a Meeting of Critical Service Partners to Design a Referral Network	
Plan the Program and Staffing Model	

Finalize Operational Budget for Services	
LAUNCH PHASE	
Project Team has Successfully Recruited first 25 Supportive Housing Units	September 2024
Hire Staff	
Train and Onboard Staff	
Launch Supportive Housing Program and Serve 25 Clients in the 25 Units	
SCALING PHASE	
Project Team Successfully Recruits full 100 Supportive Housing Units	Summer 2026
Hire Staff to Serve 100 Scattered-Site Units	
Developer Opens the 50-unit Supportive Housing Building	Fall 2027

Evaluation Criteria

The Erie Supportive Housing Project Team will consider all applications submitted. The applications will be evaluated based on a proven track record and demonstrated qualifications in the following areas:

- A) Experience in the provision of quality, trauma-informed care that includes housing-based case management, behavioral health services, and physical health integration (40 points)
- B) Experience of the applicant's proposed services team (40 points)
- C) Overall quality of the proposal including but not limited to services approach, budget, comparable projects, timeline, etc. (10 points)
- D) Experience in working with populations experiencing homelessness (10 points)

Submission and Selection Process

RFQ Posted	November 22, 2023
Question and Answer Conference	December 11, 2023 from 2:30pm – 3:30pm EST https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81396158375
Questions Due*	December 15, 2023 at 5:00pm EST
Submission Deadline	December 29, 2023 at 5:00pm EST
Interviews Conducted for Follow-Up	January 8 – 12, 2024
Estimated Selection Date	January 19, 2024

*Questions should be submitted to Wyatt Schroeder, supportive housing consultant, at wyatt@bowlingbizpa.com. All questions and responses to questions will be provided on our website (infiniteerie.com) for all to review and will be updated as frequently as needed.

Response

The response to the RFQ should take the form of a cover letter and narrative to address:

- A) **Services Team:** introduce the team members who will plan the model of care, services design, and partnership approach and their role in the project.
- B) **Description of Approach:** describe the agency's typical approach to projects similar to this one.
- C) **Team Expertise:** provide a brief description of your team's qualifications and specific evidence of prior work on quality health and housing programming that aligns with the services and the service philosophy described above.
- D) **Estimated Services Budget:** provide an estimated annual budget detail for each staff member included on your service team and other associated costs; include the potential sources of revenue to fund the services budget.
- E) **Comparable Projects:** include at least one case study of a comparable program, including the population served, service model and evidence-based practices used, success measures and client outcomes, sustainability funding models, and the partners involved.
- F) **Project Feedback:** respond to the expectations under the 'project summary' with feedback, ideas, or suggestions.

Responses due to wyatt@bowlingbizpa.com by December 29, 2023 at 5:00pm EST.