

COLUMBUS PUBLIC HEALTH
240 Parsons Ave | Columbus, Ohio 43215

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
SCOPE OF WORK
Safe Syringe and Harm Reduction Services

SYRINGE SERVICES PROGRAM SOLICITATION SPECIFICATIONS

Columbus Public Health announces the availability of \$350,000 annually to provide Safe Syringe and Harm Reduction services in the cities of Columbus and Worthington, Ohio. The purpose is to support efforts and strategies to reduce the spread of infectious disease amongst high-risk populations, including persons who inject drugs (PWID), those in active substance use or addiction, and those at highest risk for transmission of infectious disease such as HIV and Hepatitis Viruses. This RFP covers a 36-month period, January 1 2027 to December 31, 2029, dependent on funding availability. Annual contracts will be issued, and Columbus Public Health will provide oversight into service delivery. Columbus Public Health has the ability to modify contracts for service delivery with the awardee annually. Columbus Public Health can contract with additional providers.

Columbus Public Health intends to contract with an agency that has demonstrated experience serving a continuum of care for Persons Who Inject Drugs or are at high risk of infectious disease and/or overdose death due to active substance use and high-risk behaviors. This agency will implement strategies and models of engagement that support increasing access to education, materials and supplies, linkage to treatment, and supportive resources to reduce risk of spreading infectious disease and impact of substance use. Applicants should utilize relevant, evidence-based practices as they relate to the service category available through this funding opportunity.

Executive Summary

The City of Columbus provides funds for operations and the required Board of Health oversight and approval of Safe Syringe Program services for populations at highest risk of becoming infected with and transmitting bloodborne infectious disease through incidence of shared needle use, unsafe injection practices, and lack of access to clean use supplies. The intent of Columbus Public Health is to increase education, access to clean syringes and supplies, and linkage to appropriate treatment and health resources for those impacted by substance use and addiction.

Applicant Eligibility Requirements

Eligible applicants should:

1. Be in accord with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services standards for culturally and linguistically appropriate services; strive to implement strategies to recruit, retain and promote a diverse staff and leadership representative of the demographic characteristics of the service area; and ensure that staff receive education and training in culturally and linguistically appropriate service;
2. Have a City of Columbus Contract Compliance Number; register with Vendor Services to obtain a number (the agency must be "Contract Compliance in Status Active");
3. Not be debarred or suspended from working on federally assisted projects or projects in Ohio or with the City of Columbus;
4. Have the capacity to implement the funded program for duration of period of funding in compliance with Ohio Revised Code ORC 3707.57; and
5. Be registered with the Ohio Secretary of State to conduct business in the state of Ohio.

PROPOSAL INFORMATION

A. Background

Columbus Public Health seeks to protect health and improve lives inclusive of persons who inject drugs or are at significant risk of bloodborne infectious disease or other infections associated with active substance use and high-risk behaviors. In 2016 Columbus Public Health and the Board of Health endorsed the provision of Columbus' first syringe exchange program with the goal to provide clean syringes to intravenous drug users to reduce occurrences of reusing same syringe and needle sharing. Services included STI testing, counseling, and linkage to care as well as support of safe syringe disposal and safer use practices.

The directive from the Columbus Public Health Board of Health requires that any Safe Syringe Exchange program MUST

- Provide one for one exchange of syringes
- Provide initial and routine risk reduction counseling/planning and overdose education
- Provide health education and make referrals to appropriate additional services when necessary

Columbus Public Health strives to continue to support services to increase education, treatment access, and resources to reduce the negative impact of substance use on the community.

B. Priority Sub-Populations

According to the Ohio Department of Health, in 2024; there were 919 new diagnoses of HIV reported in Ohio with 8% of these being among persons who inject drugs. Of the total number of new HIV cases in Ohio, 20% were among persons who reside in Franklin County. Currently, the most common mode of transmission of Hepatitis C in the U.S. occurs due to injection drug use through blood transfer from sharing needles and other drug paraphernalia. There were over 3,480 cases of acute and chronic Hepatitis C in Ohio in 2023. These rates of infection prioritizes individuals involved in or at high risk of using drugs intravenously.

Due to associated drug use behaviors and drug use environment, individuals engaged in active substance use are also at high risk for infection of sexually transmitted diseases and often go without accurate diagnoses and remain untreated. These interventions will assist these individuals with linking to resources to obtain proper diagnoses and linkage to care to treat any sexually transmitted disease to reduce potential to spread disease. With the significant increase in prevalence of congenital syphilis cases in Central Ohio targeted efforts driven by data trends prioritize engaging in sex workers and others with substance use disorders.

This population also experiences increased prevalence of mental health conditions, medical needs, and environmental stressors and would benefit from being linked to resources to assist them in accessing appropriate treatment and basic needs.

Summary of Activities

Columbus Public Health seeks to promote harm reduction strategies to reduce rates of infectious disease transmission amongst people who inject drugs and/or are actively using substances by contracting with vendor to provide safe syringe services program. This program will follow guidelines outlined in Ohio Revised Code section 3707.57 and comply with service contract with funder Columbus Public Health. The vendor shall have the capacity to market and outreach, educate, and provide harm reduction services to intended population, maintain and secure client demographic information, track program data, and provide routine reports to funder (monthly or quarterly). The vendor will develop system of client identification to track number of supplies provided to each participant.

The funding is intended to support operating costs for services, *with the exception of purchasing syringes*, including:

- Provide safe injection and risk reduction planning to a minimum of 1,500 unique participants including providing new syringes to participants on a one-to-one exchange model with monthly limit of 400, provide safe injection and smoking equipment, and risk reduction education.
- Provide on-site HIV, Hepatitis C, and STI testing to a minimum of 150 unique participants utilizing syringe access services.
- Provide Risk Reduction Counseling Services to a minimum of 1,500 unique participants who utilize syringe service to include identifying risk factors through intake paperwork and follow up visit form, ongoing risk assessments, and routine health screening.
- Provide Overdose Prevention Education to a minimum of 1,500 unique participants of syringe services.
- Provide a minimum of 1,500 unique participants with on-site alcohol and drug consultation and/or referral to AOD treatment or recovery support services.
- Provide Safe Syringe Disposal education to a minimum of 1,500 unique participants utilizing syringe access services.
- Provide on-site access and training on the use of naloxone kits and fentanyl test strips, and safe smoking supplies as needed.
- Provide referrals to behavioral health and medical care providers including those services for populations at highest risk i.e. pregnant women, survivors of human trafficking.
- Provide quarterly reports and annual summary and impact reports based on program participant and service utilization data.

Data collection information shall include the following:

- Total number of program visits and number of program days during quarterly period
- Total number of syringes distributed, and syringes exchanged/returned for disposal
- Total number of unique clients receiving following service during reporting period
 - Risk reduction counseling
 - Overdose prevention education
 - Alcohol and Drug Consultation
 - Safe syringe disposal education
 - HIV, HCV, STI testing on site
 - wound care
 - safe injection education
- Total number of positive results from HIV, HCV, STI testing
- Total number of Harm reduction supplies and materials provided
- Total number of unique clients referred to mental health, medical care, and alcohol and drug treatment

The selected vendor will make every effort to provide accessible services to diverse and inclusive populations within priority population which may be further defined based on collected data.

SUMMARY OF FUNDED SERVICE PROVIDER (SUB-RECIPIENT) REQUIREMENTS

The selected vendor shall:

- Submit invoices no less than quarterly which include all FTEs, time and effort reports, and if applicable, program income tracking. Provide the CITY with an invoice detailing services rendered/positions paid for, monthly costs and associated administrative charges. All positions covered should be listed by name and include hire date and date of termination, when applicable.
- Provide quarterly reports detailing number of clients served, client demographic information, number utilizing defined service in contract, infectious disease status, number of supplies and materials provided
- Not use information that could compromise a client's confidentiality in communications regarding services contained in this RFP.

SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. General Instructions

For Funding Consideration: Agencies and organizations responding to this RFP must respond to all questions/request for information included in the "Proposal Format and Scoring Criteria", including budget and budget narrative, and submit required forms and attachments. The program and budget narratives should be typed in 12-point type, Arial font, 1.5 spaced with pages numbered in the Footer. The submitted application must have an authorized signature present.

All bids must be submitted electronically; paper and/or email bids will not be accepted. Proposals must be submitted electronically through the City of Columbus Euna Procurement hub at <https://columbus.bonfirehub.com/portal>. The reference # for this solicitation in Bonfire is RFQ033803. Vendors must be registered with the City of Columbus and Euna Procurement to submit proposals. DO NOT SUBMIT BIDS TO THIS RFQ WITHIN THIS PORTAL. IT IS ONLY USED TO NOTIFY VENDORS OF THE RFP IN EUNA. Bids submitted to this RFQ within the City of Columbus' Vendor Services Portal will NOT be reviewed or considered. No paper or email bids will be accepted.

Applications must be received by October 27, 2026 at 1pm

Funding decisions will be based on the highest scoring proposals that address the RFP criteria. Based on recommendations provided by the RFP review committee, Columbus Public Health reserves the right to adjust funding amounts requested based on availability of funds or as deemed necessary to achieve the best use of the funds. Receipt of an award letter is not a guarantee of funding. Prior funding awards do not guarantee continued or future funding. Columbus Public Health, at its sole and absolute discretion, with or without cause, and without liability of any kind to any applicant, reserves the right to accept or reject any and/or all proposals either in whole or in part, waive any informalities or irregularities of any proposals, cancel this RFP at any time and/or take any action in the best interest of the CITY. Columbus Public Health's decision in matters shall be final. The CITY reserves the right to contact an applicant if additional information is required.

B. Award Recommendation

Applicants will be notified no later than November 6, 2026 of funding recommendations.

C. Program Monitoring

Applicants approved for funding will be required to maintain and submit adequate information necessary to monitor program accountability and progress in accordance with the terms and conditions of the agreement. Awarded service providers (sub-recipients) noncompliant with City, State, or Federal policies, regulations and mandates are solely responsible for all financial reimbursements, penalties, and findings. This includes, but is not limited to, instances of funded sub-recipients found to have paid unallowable costs. In such instances, the funded sub-recipient shall repay the CITY or client for all such costs.

D. Anticipated Timeline

Services RFP Released: Provision of Outreach	October 6, 2026
Questions and Answers Posted in Vendor Services	October 6 to October 21, 2026 5:00pm
Proposal Due Date:	October 27, 2026 at 1:00 pm
Submitted Proposal Review Process:	October 28 to November 4, 2026
Award Recommendation Announcement:	November 6, 2026
Contract Term Begins:	January 1, 2027
Contract Term Ends:	December 31, 2027
Contract Renews Annually Dependent on Funding Availability Through:	December 31, 2029
Contracts Issues Calendar Year:	January 1 to December 31

PROPOSAL FORMAT AND SCORING CRITERIA

1. **All bids must be submitted electronically; paper and/or email bids will not be accepted.** Proposals must be submitted electronically through the City of Columbus Euna Procurement hub at <https://columbus.bonfirehub.com/portal>. The reference # for this solicitation in Bonfire is RFQ033803. No paper or email bids will be accepted.
2. Answer each question in the application to the best of your ability using data to support your responses whenever possible. Respond to all questions in the order in which they are listed. Clearly identify each section with proper headings, which are provided for each section/question.
3. Follow the page limit guidelines listed under Project Summary (one page), Organizational Experience and Capacity (maximum three pages), Description of Services (maximum ten pages), and Quality Assurance (maximum two pages).
4. The program and budget narratives should be typed in 12-point Arial font, 1.5 spaced with pages numbered in the Footer.
5. Submitted proposals will be reviewed by a committee of individuals selected by Columbus Public Health, who will evaluate and score proposals accepted for review under this RFP. Funding recommendations will be based upon the committee's scoring results utilizing the following criteria and scoring:

CRITERIA	MAXIMUM POINTS
A. Project Summary	0
B. Organizational Experience and Capacity	25
C. Description of Services	60
D. Quality Assurance	5
E. Cost and Price	10
TOTAL POINTS	100

6. Final funding recommendations will be presented to the Columbus Public Health Board of Health and Columbus City Council for final approval. All funding decisions are final.
7. Release of funds will be contingent upon satisfactory review of the activities and expenditures and the availability of funds.

A. Project Summary

0 points

Summarize the submitted proposal. Please ensure that all organization contacts are listed by name, phone, and email. The project summary will not be scored and should not exceed one page.

B. Organizational Experience and Capacity (max: 25 points)

The organizational experience and capacity section should not exceed three pages. Describe the nature, purpose, and qualifications of applicant agency by responding to questions 1-3 below.

1. *Organizational Background:* Summarize the applicant agency's organizational background. If services will also be provided by a partner organization(s), include a summary of their organizational background(s). **15 points**
2. *Experience Serving Priority Population:* Describe the applicant's and/or partner agency's (if applicable) past or

current experience serving the priority populations. If the applicant and/or partner agency has no experience with the priority population, explain how the applicant and/or partner agency will obtain cultural competence to serve this community. **5 points**

3. *Staffing Structure for Proposed Project:* Describe how the applicant agency will staff the positions designed to meet the service needs of the priority population. Provide qualifications and responsibilities for all positions to be funded through this application. List the number of FTEs, job classifications, and credentialed providers who will be assigned to this grant and indicate if they will be new hires or existing staff. **5 points**

C. Description of Services (max: 60 points)

Using a maximum of 10 pages, provide a description of services regarding distribution of new syringes to PWID, HIV and STI testing, harm reduction education and supplies, risk reduction counseling, and referral to services process. Be sure to clearly define who will provide the service, e.g. the applicant and/or a partner agency.

1. Describe how the applicant will implement syringe exchange services using one for one model, creating allotment limits to participants of 400 syringes per month, while working to ensure participants have beneficial access to needed syringes and harm reduction supplies; and how will applicant incorporate other defined services into program structure. This should include covering cost for supplies not allowed under this application funds. **20 points**
2. Describe how the applicant agency will implement outreach and marketing strategies to inform and solicit support of services from potential participants, the community where services located, and stakeholders. This should include applicants plan to build and grow participant engagement in services. **15 points**
3. Describe how the agency will implement evidence based and trauma informed models and practices throughout programming to encourage participant's engagement, motivation to change, and risk reduction; this should include plans to provide routine risk assessments, screenings, and goal plans. **15 points**
4. Describe how the applicant agency will structure days and hours of operation to best serve clients. **10 points**

D. Quality Assurance (max: 5 points)

The quality assurance section should not exceed two pages and should respond to questions 1-2 below.

1. *Data Collection and Confidential Information:* Describe the process that will be used to ensure that all required data information (see page 3) is collected and submitted to CPH on monthly, quarterly, and annual timeframe. **3 points**
2. *Rules, Regulations, and Policies:* Explain how the applicant will ensure that all services reimbursed through this contract shall be consistent with federal, state and local rules, regulations, and policies. **2 points**

E. Cost and Price (max: 10 points)

The total cost and price of the project cannot exceed \$350,000. The bidder must provide a budget and include narrative for all Services offered in the proposal. **10 points**

TOTAL (max: 100)