April 8, 2020

The CUNY Institute for State and Local Governance (ISLG) appreciates your interest in the Request for Proposals (RFP) for the evaluation of Selected Reentry Programs as part of the Criminal Justice Investment Initiative (CJII).

This addendum includes answers to questions submitted via CJII Application Portal to ISLG by March 20, 2020.
ANSWERS TO APPLICANT QUESTIONS
Evaluation of the
Selected Reentry Programs

PROGRAM DESIGN

QUESTION: Should evaluators assume that all individuals interested in participating in BOSS programming will participate? If not, what are the selection criteria for the program? What percentage of those interested are selected for participation?

ANSWER: BOSS programming will serve all eligible and interested participants to the extent that capacity allows. If the program reaches capacity, it will serve eligible applicants on a first-come, first-served basis. CCF does not expect program demand to exceed capacity, but will maintain a waiting list if necessary.

QUESTION: Specifically, for the CCF Build-Out of Student Services (BOSS) Program, the 12-week pre-release program will require an incarceration period of at least 12 weeks, which cannot be ensured with a jail population. Will this aspect only be implemented with a prison population?

ANSWER: The Peer Mentoring Program (PMP) is still in its planning stages, but is expected to be offered to women approaching release from either jail or prison. For participants in jails, the program plans to screen for length of stay to ensure that the PMP can be completed prior to release.

QUESTION: Are the target populations for both programs exclusive prison populations or jail populations or both? If both, is there any way to anticipate which is the greater proportion of the program participants?

ANSWER: The target population for the CCF BOSS Program includes women currently or recently incarcerated in jail or prison. CCF anticipates that a majority of participants will be returning to the community from prison specifically. The target population for the Osborne WHCRP’s Credible Messenger component includes the individuals who were found to be responsible in the 2014 law enforcement intervention and who have returned or will return from prison, as well as individuals who received a non-incarceratory sentence in that case. Additionally, through the Credible Messenger and other components, the WHCRP will serve individuals living in the affected areas who were not involved in the case but who are currently involved, or are risk of becoming involved, in violence.

QUESTION: Do the programs have specific exclusion or inclusion criteria for their participants, e.g., risk levels?

ANSWER: The ASP and CAP components of the BOSS program are available to women who were recently released from jail or prison and reside in or near New York City; the PMP component is only available to women who are currently incarcerated in
jail or prison, and who plan to return to the New York City metropolitan area. The WHCRP focus population includes any residents of the Manhattanville and Grant NYCHA Houses and the surrounding community who have been affected by the 2014 law enforcement intervention—whether directly or indirectly. The WHCRP’s Credible Messenger component will additionally focus on community members who were not involved in the 2014 intervention, but are at risk of becoming, or are currently, involved in violence. There are no further stated eligibility or ineligibility criteria for the programs.

QUESTION: The RFP states that participation in ASP is considered to be complete when the participant finishes their college degree. If participants are enrolled in traditional 4-year degree programs, they may not have finished it by the end of the 3.5-year evaluation period and would have an impact on the final outcome analyses. Can you provide more information about what the average length of degree completion is expected to be (since it will be dependent on the type of programs participants will be enrolling in)?

ANSWER: In the first two quarters of data from CCF’s BOSS program, ASP participants were primarily enrolled in associate’s degree programs (requiring 60 credits) and bachelor’s degree programs (requiring 120 credits). Some ASP participants are also enrolled in graduate programs, which have generally required 60 credits. On average, a full-time student completes 60 credits in two years, though ASP participants can be enrolled in college part-time. In addition, many students who enroll in ASP already have some college credits at program intake, which may allow them to complete their degrees more quickly, e.g., to finish their bachelor’s degree in around two years. Applicants should consider that the CJII-funded program implementation periods for BOSS and WHCRP are expected to end in June 2022 and June 2023, respectively, with an additional data year beyond those points for each program, i.e., through June 2023 and June 2024. As the evaluation is expected to run through late 2023, the BOSS evaluation could expect to incorporate at least one year of follow-up for most program participants.

QUESTION: On page 13 of the RFP, dosage information is provided for three core components of the WHCRP programming. It is also stated that some participants may engage in the WHCRP programming for more than one year. Is it appropriate to assume that project participants will typically be involved in the programming for one year?

ANSWER: The WHCRP is expected to be a flexible program, with program dosage determined by each participant’s individual needs as well as engagement in particular program components. Osborne anticipates that restorative justice participants will engage for less than a year on average, whereas most credible messenger participants will engage for a year or more. Participants may engage in more than one program component.

QUESTION: Is enrollment/participation expected to occur on a rolling basis, where individuals could start and stop at any time?

ANSWER: Enrollment/participation is expected to occur on a rolling basis for both programs for most program components. For the WHCRP, Credible Messenger services are expected to be available on-the-spot, and the regularly scheduled Restorative Justice
programming is also expected to facilitate rolling enrollment. The BOSS Program’s PMP is cohort-based (three cohorts expected in 2020, and 6-9 annually thereafter), and certain offerings under the ASP component are expected to be cohort-based as well, e.g., multi-generational support services (two cohorts expected annually).

QUESTION: To what degree should evaluators expect law enforcement (e.g., police officers, prosecutors) to be involved in the restorative justice or other components of WHCRP?

ANSWER: If and when the community is ready, the WHCRP plans to invite law enforcement members to participate in the restorative justice circles, e.g., to establish common language about peace and reconciliation and an understanding of what transformed community-law enforcement relationship can look like. To elaborate, this component may involve circles with only law enforcement members prior to shared circles including law enforcement with other community members.

QUESTION: Are there any anticipated delays in proposal submission deadline, award date, and/or implementation of the West Harlem Community Reentry Project (currently scheduled to begin in July 2020), including as a result of Covid-19? How should the evaluator address potential impacts of COVID-19 on program planning, implementation, and/or activities that might affect study timelines, research questions, study design etc.?

ANSWER: At this time, the West Harlem Community Reentry Project is still scheduled to begin in July 2020. However, given uncertainty surrounding the progression of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is possible this start date may be delayed and/or that the program may be extended, particularly the Capacity-Building Incubator. If so, DANY and ISLG will be in touch to discuss any changes to the scope of work or timeline.

More generally, the evaluator’s contract will include a planning phase, which typically lasts 4-6 months and includes activities such as evaluation plan drafting and review, IRB submission and approval, and DUA negotiation. Accordingly, applicants should not expect to conduct data collection activities until late 2020 or early 2021. Evaluation deliverables and the evaluation timeline will be negotiated during the contracting phase after an evaluator(s) is awarded funding.

EVALUATION DESIGN

QUESTION: The RFP specifies an overall number of BOSS clients in each of three years, specifying the number BOSS clients served with CJII funding in each year (p. 15). Should the evaluator plan to distinguish between these in the research design?

ANSWER: The distinction between CJII and non-CJII participants is limited to funding; CCF expects that the specific funding source will not be related to any difference in participant experience. Therefore, evaluation applicants may propose to include the fuller universe of BOSS clients in the evaluation, contingent on negotiation of a Data Use Agreement (DUA; if relevant) with CCF.
QUESTION: Will ISLG, programs, or any subcontractors be able to obtain informed consent from the study participants or will the evaluator be required to do so directly?

**ANSWER:** Applicants should include consent processes/details for each evaluation activity, as appropriate. Following the grant award, any proposed evaluation activity will be reviewed by ISLG, the program(s), and presumably, the evaluator’s IRB. It is possible that program staff may be involved in the consent process, if the aforementioned actors determine it to be feasible and appropriate.

QUESTION: Is the TTA provided by Osborne to the Capacity-Building Incubator sites considered part of the program, and should it be part of the evaluation?

**ANSWER:** Yes, the TTA that Osborne provides to subcontractors through the Capacity-Building Incubator should be included as part of the evaluation, particularly the process evaluation component and but also the outcome evaluation, depending on the organizations funded and the substance of their work.

QUESTION: Will evaluators be expected to identify a comparison group?

**ANSWER:** As stated on pages 18 and 19 of the Evaluation RFP, evaluators are expected to propose a comparison group only for CCF’s BOSS program, as similar as possible to the treatment group of BOSS participants. Applicants proposing to evaluate the BOSS program should also articulate an approach to adjust for possible differences between the treatment and comparison group(s). The evaluator is not expected to identify a comparison group for the WHCRP evaluation.

QUESTION: Can any further guidance be provided on the period of performance? Since the final data year goes through June 2024 for the WHCRP, should bidders propose mid-2021 through June 2024?

**ANSWER:** The evaluator’s contract is expected to run from mid-2020 through late 2023. During the final data year (i.e., the year after programming ends), programs are expected to provide and interpret program data and otherwise participate in the evaluation. The final data years run through June 2023 for CCF’s BOSS program and through June 2024 for Osborne’s WHCRP. For the BOSS program, the data year should allow for all participants to have at least one year of follow-up in any evaluation design. For WHCRP, a follow-up period of this length may not be possible for all participants, though length of engagement may also be relatively short for some participants and as such, longer-term follow-up periods may not be appropriate. Applicants should propose feasible approaches given the constraints of each program, as well as specific outcome evaluation measures.

**EVALUATION DATA**

We received several questions about the type of data to be collected by the programs and any subcontractors and micro-grantees (in the WHCRP specifically). This response serves to address those questions.
ANSWER: For the WHCRP, it is expected that the three Capacity-Building Incubator organizations, as well as the RJ and CM contractors/programs, will generate and share data with Osborne. Osborne will collect and review micro-grantee performance on an annual basis, and will share that information with the evaluator.

Additionally, Osborne and CCF will collect data on all participants including, but not limited to, number of participants in each program component, their characteristics (e.g., age, gender, race/ethnicity, county of residence, employment/education status, and reentry status), dosage, coordination and referral to supportive services, program completion, program duration, and short-term outcomes. These data are expected to be provided to ISLG in aggregate format on a quarterly basis.

Evaluators should describe their anticipated data needs, including the time points and/or frequency of data transfer from programs. If Personally Identifiable Information (PII) are required for the evaluation of this program, a data use agreement (DUA) will be negotiated and agreed upon by the relevant program and ISLG, which shall govern the treatment of all PII.

QUESTION: Can evaluators assume they will have access to the mapping process that subcontractors used to determine recruitment and outreach for the WHCRP?

ANSWER: Yes, evaluators will have the opportunity to ask WHCRP subcontractors about the mapping process used to determine WHCRP recruitment and outreach and to ask for program materials relevant to this process.

QUESTION: Is data on education levels available in NY prison/jail administrative data?

ANSWER: Highest educational attainment is typically included in these administrative datasets. However, the evaluator should not assume that it is consistently or accurately available for every individual in prison or jail.

QUESTION: For the BOSS program outcome analyses, will information be available on individuals who were eligible to participate but did not, especially on behaviors, attitudes, substance use and well-being?

ANSWER: The evaluator is encouraged to propose a method of accounting for the behaviors, attitudes, and attributes of a comparison group who would have been eligible for CCF’s BOSS program (i.e., women returning from jail or prison) but did not participate. However, CCF is not anticipated to track or have access to that information for non-participants based on its envisioned outreach/enrollment activities.

QUESTION: Are there data collection instruments (e.g., surveys) already in place for the collection of data on behaviors, attitudes, substance use, well-being and perceived fairness of the justice system that could be administered before the intervention begins or participation starts?
ANSWER: Each program maintains its own intake/assessment process and, if relevant, additional/ongoing data collection. This information is expected to be recorded in each program’s case management system. For the BOSS program, information on behaviors/attitudes/beliefs is primarily collected anecdotally via case notes. Some program components do include specific instruments, e.g., a Soft Skills assessment in CAP and a Career & Education Plan in PMP. For the WHCRP, this process typically includes information on demographic characteristics, physical and mental health, housing, substance use, and criminal legal history. Applicants may propose to supplement this information with additional data collection. All evaluation activities will be reviewed by ISLG and the program(s).

PROPOSAL FORMAT

QUESTION: If applying for both grants, are you anticipating two separate 10-page proposals or one proposal with a blended background and program evaluations broken out separately?

ANSWER: If applying to evaluate both programs, please upload a single Evaluation Proposal file in the CII Application Portal, with a maximum of 20 pages. As long as the applicant clearly distinguishes the research review, design and design justification, data sources and collection, measures, and publication/dissemination strategy for each program, applicants may blend background/contextual information as they see fit.

QUESTION: If one organization is proposing to evaluate both programs, is it preferred that they submit one narrative and one budget or two?

ANSWER: Applicants should submit a single Evaluation Budget Narrative file (three pages if applying to evaluate both programs, or two pages if applying to evaluate only one program). If applying to evaluate both programs, the document may be formatted as separate narratives or as a combined narrative. Applicants should also submit a single Evaluation Budget file. The Evaluation Budget should include a separate breakdown of funds for the process evaluations and outcome evaluations, for each program the applicant proposes to evaluate, by year.

QUESTION: Is there a suggested outline to follow regarding the narrative? I don't see a place for "statement of problem" or "background" but am thinking that would still be important. Are we free to write what makes sense?

ANSWER: There is no specific template for a narrative that applicants should follow. We encourage applicants to include any content necessary to convey the requested information.

QUESTION: Can the font for tables be less than 12 points?
ANSWER: In general, applications should be formatted with Times New Roman 12-point font, and should be double-spaced with 1-inch margins. Charts, figures, tables, footnotes, endnotes, and references do not need to be double-spaced, but are included in any restrictions on length unless otherwise noted. Tables should be formatted with 12-point font whenever possible.

OTHER QUESTIONS

QUESTION: Is there preference for a contractor willing/able to take on both of the programs described in this solicitation?

ANSWER: The evaluation design for each program will be scored separately according to the criteria described in Section VII.B of the RFP, and these scores will be considered alongside other goals/priorities of CJII and this initiative in determining the winning proposal(s).

QUESTION: If an evaluator proposes evaluating both programs, is it possible for CJII to select to award one evaluation and not the other?

ANSWER: It is possible that separate evaluators will be awarded funding through this RFP, among them applicant(s) who initially proposed to evaluate both programs. If proposing to evaluate both programs, applicants should articulate whether they would be willing and able to undertake the project in the event that they are only selected for one of the evaluations.

QUESTION: Please confirm the expected contract type is firm fixed price. If not, what is the expected contract type?

ANSWER: As articulated in Section III.B of the RFP, the contract payment structure will be deliverables-based, i.e., contingent on successful completion of deliverables according to a timeline to be negotiated following notification of the award.

QUESTION: Our firm is currently providing strategic planning support to one of the programs. Does this work result in a conflict of interest and would we be ineligible to submit a proposal for the evaluation of that program?

ANSWER: Applicants with existing or prior relationships with one or both programs are eligible to apply for funding through this RFP. Per Section VI.D, applicants should describe their experience relevant to the evaluation, and per Section VI.C, are encouraged to submit letters of support from relevant agencies and organizations, as appropriate. As part of their proposal, applicants should describe the nature of any perceived or actual conflict of interest and how they will mitigate it.