

I. Introduction

The City of Austin (City) seeks proposals in response to this Request for Proposals (RFP) from qualified social service providers (Offerors) with demonstrated experience with staffing personal attendants for Medicare recipients residing in Austin/Travis County. The City will fund programs that can demonstrate knowledge of and experience recruiting and staffing personal attendants, navigating the Medicare system, and can demonstrate innovative and data driven methods for providing personal attendant services for Austin/Travis County’s most vulnerable Medicare recipients.

II. Background and Purpose of Funding

On [August 19, 2022](#) Council members Kitchen and Kelly cosponsored a proposal to allocate \$385,000 in one-time funding for a 6-month pilot program to study best practices for recruiting and retaining personal attendants.

American Disabled for Attendant Programs Today (ADAPT) and the Personal Attendant Coalition (PAC) responded to the City of Austin’s fiscal year 2023 budget survey and identified a need to address the underfunding of personal attendants and indicated that it is a crisis impacting the city. This 6-month pilot program to address the identified need is a collaboration of Austin Public Health, Austin-Travis County Emergency Medical Services (ATCEMS), ADAPT, and PAC of Texas.

As of January 2022, The State of Texas’ Department of Health and Human Services increased [the base hourly wage they’ll pay for personal attendants to \\$8.11](#). [According to Massachusetts Institute of Technology \(MIT\)](#), in 2022 the hourly living wage for a single person in Austin is \$14.91 and the hourly living wage for a family with two kids is \$25.57. In response to this gap, many agencies providing home health and personal attendant services in Austin supplement the state base pay to pay a minimum hourly wage of \$15; however, even with this supplemental pay, agencies have a difficult time recruiting and retaining qualified staff.

The services these personal attendants provide are basic necessary service such as toileting assistance, meal prep and feeding, and ambulation and dressing. Without these services, people are at greater risk of falls or injury, and in turn are at a greater risk for needing more assistance from emergency services, including EMS, Fire Departments, and/or emergency rooms.

Solicitation Objectives

The objectives of this funding are to:

1. Reduce assist calls to Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and Fire Department,
2. Alleviate higher cost care at emergency rooms,
3. Improve public health outcomes for Medicare recipients,
4. Stabilize the workforce, and
5. Demonstrate a more cost-effective use of taxpayer dollars.

III. Funding and Timeline

Department: Austin Public Health

Services Solicited: Personal Attendant Pilot

Available Funding: \$385,000

Request Limits: \$385,000

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Anticipated Number of Awarded Agreements: APH anticipates awarding one agreement beginning on September 15, 2023. Proposals must be submitted using the 6-month budget allocation. Collaborative applications will be considered; however, a lead agency must be identified.

Contract Term:

Awarded programs may be structured as a reimbursable-based agreement or a deliverables-based agreement, as defined below:

- **Reimbursable Agreement:** An agreement where an agency is reimbursed for expenses incurred and paid through the provision of adequate supporting documentation that verifies the expenses.
- **Deliverable Agreement:** An agreement where an agency is reimbursed for a report or product that must be delivered to the City by the grantee (or by the Subgrantee to the Grantee) to satisfy contractual requirements. It can include goods or finished works, documentation of services provided, or activities undertaken, and/or other related documentation.

IV. Services Solicited

Program Services

Preference will be given to agencies who meet any or all of the following criteria:

1. At the time of application have at least 5 appropriately qualified full time or part time personal attendants on staff and be willing to supplement increased wages with this funding
2. Are registered Medicare providers
3. Have at least 2 years of providing personal attendant services to Medicare or Medicare eligible residents of City of Austin/Travis County
4. Have, or be able to obtain, at least 12 months of data for the metrics outlined in the “VI. Data Collection” section
5. Agree that recipients of Personal Attendant Pilot services will be selected by City of Austin

This funding cannot fund direct medical care or medical services outside of those normally performed by a personal attendant.

As this is a study rooted in exploring any methods that meet the Solicitation Objectives (in II. Background and Purpose of Funding), the City allows and encourages agencies to propose solutions to meet community needs effectively. This is a non-exhaustive list of possible utilization of funds for this study:

- Providing pay raises to personal attendants (utilizing the required stipulations outlined above)
- Increasing or decreasing hours to meet the needs of staff
- Providing benefits, including but not limited to health insurance, HSA or FSA benefits, retirement funds, childcare, commute stipends, meals services, etc.

V. Principles of Service Delivery

1. **Trauma-Informed Practices:** Successful Offerors will apply [the principles of trauma-informed practice](#) to program and service delivery: safety, choice, collaboration, trustworthiness, and empowerment. Examples of applied principles may include program co-creation with those directly impacted, access to or referral to religious or spiritual guidance, access to or referral to qualified and experienced counselors, and discreet delivery of services that avoid or eliminate stigma.

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2. Language Access Plan: Offerors will be in development of or already have developed a [Language Access Plan](#). A language access plan is a document that guides the implementation of or plan to provide access to translation and interpretation services. Language access plans include a four-factor assessment that links service provision with the languages spoken in a grantee's geographic service area.
3. Referrals: Offerors should offer access to referrals and information on how to access other aligned services and providers.
4. Program Accessibility: Programs should actively seek to eliminate barriers to services such as lack of transportation, limited communication and outreach, immigration documentation status, institutional barriers, and other restrictions.
5. Equitable Service Delivery: Offerors must ensure that programs are providing services that meet the needs of diverse populations, considering systemic, institutional, and environmental barriers and inequities that exist and seek to mitigate the effects on participant outcomes.

Best Practices

All supportive services programs are encouraged to incorporate the following best practices:

- Evidence-based Practices: Evidence-based practices are those which have been developed from research, are found to produce meaningful outcomes, can be standardized and replicated, and often have existing tools to measure adherence to the model. Offerors are encouraged to use evidence-based practices in their proposed program designs.
- Incorporating Perspectives from People with Lived Experience: Programs should be designed with input from individuals with lived expertise.
- Livable Wage: The City of Austin recommends Offerors follow Strategic Direction measure EOA.C.3 and pay at least a livable wage to all staff working on the program ([EOA.C.3 - Dollars-per-hour wage that an individual must earn to support a family in Austin | Open Data | City of Austin Texas](#)).

VI. Data Collection and Program Performance

Data Collection and Reporting

To fulfill the needs of this study, the agency must be able to demonstrate the impact of their program. Data must be collected on at least the following 3 metrics.

Metrics for data collection must include:

1. The health outcomes for Medicare recipients receiving increased personal attendant services (as measured by quality, quantity, and/or severity).
2. The costs and impacts of applied best practices for personal attendant recruitment and retention, including but not limited to pay raises, increasing available hours, improving schedule consistency, and/or benefits packages.

Additional relevant data metrics will be considered.

Client tracking should include methods for securely recording identity, zip code, income, and demographics of the people served without violating client confidentiality. The City does not collect personal health information (PHI) or personal identifying information (PII). PHI or PII must not be submitted to the City and, if collected by the agency, must be securely maintained.

Performance Measures

The awardee will be required to report on the following:

Output:

1. Number of unduplicated individuals served in a 12-month period.
2. Number of hours of service provided to high priority Medicare users
3. Number of calls to EMS by enrolled individuals

Outcome:

1. Percent of individuals who achieve healthy outcomes because of receiving services through Health Equity Social Service Contracts.
Numerator: Number of individuals who report improvement in physical, mental, emotional, or social functioning.
Denominator: Number of individuals receiving services through Health Equity Social Service Contracts.
2. Percent of individual Personal Attendants likely to retain their positions for at least 12 months
Numerator: Number of Personal Attendants employed by the agency who agree that practices, including pay rate by the agency, would encourage them to stay for 12+ months in this position
Denominator: Number of Personal Attendants employed by the agency

VII. Priority Populations

Clients receiving personal attendant services will be chosen by the City of Austin. Personal attendants are not limited by residency restrictions but must provide the majority of their services to residents living in City of Austin and/or Travis. Clients must be enrolled in Medicare.

VIII. Austin Public Health Emergency Response

All agencies which are awarded funding through Austin Public Health Requests for Proposals are expected to provide emergency services in the event of a public health emergency (see Sections 8.6 and 8.6.1 of Exhibit E: Standard Boilerplate). Should agencies be called upon to engage in response activities, contract resources may be shifted, or new uses of resources approved within an awarded program budget at the discretion of the City.

IX. Additional Resources

- [Low pay for personal care attendants means some Texans with disabilities go without services](#)
- [It's a Good Jobs Shortage: The Real Reason So Many Workers Are Quitting](#)
- [Care workers are deeply undervalued and underpaid](#)
- [Effective employee retention strategies in healthcare](#)
- [Strategies for improving employee retention in healthcare](#)
- [City of Austin Living Wage](#)

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- [HHSC Publishes Payment Rates for Primary Home Care, Community Attendant Services, Family Care Personal Attendant Services \(IL 2022-04\)](#)
- [Austin-Travis County Emergency Medical Services Open Data Catalog](#)
- [Austin Fire Department \(AFD\) and Austin Travis County Emergency Medical Services \(ATCEMS\) stations](#)

X. Application Evaluation

A total of 100 points may be awarded to the application. All applications will be evaluated as to how the proposed program aligns with the goals of this RFP and whether each question has been adequately addressed.

RFP 2023-009 Personal Attendant Pilot Evaluation Rubric		
Form 1: Offer Sheet	Offerors must print, sign, scan, and upload signed forms.	No points, but Offeror must submit signed form.
Form 2: RFP Proposal		
Part 1: Fiscal and Administrative Capacity	Agency Information	No points awarded, but Offeror must pass threshold defined in Offeror Minimum Qualifications below.
Part 2: Scored Proposal		
Section 1: Experience and Cultural Competence	Agency experience and performance	20 points
	Cultural competence and racial equity	5 points
		25 points total
Section 2: Program Design	Program Services	20 points
	Data Collection & Program Performance	20 points
	Principles of Service Delivery	5 points
		45 points total
Section 3: Cost Effectiveness	Program Staffing and Time	10 points
	Program Budget and Funding Summary	20 points
Form 3		30 points total
		Total: 100 points
Form 4: COA Certifications and Disclosures	Offerors must print, sign, scan, and upload signed forms.	No points, but Offeror must submit signed form.

XI. Applicant Minimum Qualifications

- The agency must have at least two years of experience staffing personal attendants who provide services to Medicaid recipients.
- Be a non-profit organization or quasi-governmental entity able to conduct business in the State of Texas, and legally contract with Austin Public Health.
- Have submitted all applicable tax returns to the IRS and the State of Texas (e.g., Form 990 or 990-EZ and state and federal payroll tax filings).
- Be eligible to contract and not be debarred from contracting with the City of Austin, State of Texas and Federal government, according to SAM.gov, and State and City Debarment information.
- Be current in its payment of Federal and State payroll taxes.
- Not owe past due taxes to the City.
- Be able to meet APH's standard agreement terms and conditions, which includes Social Services Insurance Requirements.
- Have an active Board of Directors that meets regularly and reviews program performance, financial performance, and annually approves the agency budget. The Board of Directors shall have a strong commitment to fundraising to ensure well-funded, sustainable programs and operations.

XII. Application Format and Submission Requirements

See **Exhibit B: Solicitation Provisions, and Instructions for all requirements.**

The Proposal must be submitted in the PartnerGrants database. No late submissions will be accepted. Responses should be included for each question.

Please note: Only name your uploaded documents with letters and numbers. To reduce possible submission and/or review delays, please ensure any attached file from your local drive DOES NOT contain any special characters.

Offerors Initial Steps: Registration

1. Confirm your organization is a registered vendor with the City of Austin.
 - To find the City of Austin Vendor Number please visit Austin Finance Online and search for the organization's legal name.
 - To register to become a potential City of Austin vendor, go to Austin Finance Online to register.
2. Be a registered user in the PartnerGrants system. The proposals will be submitted through this web-based system.
 - To register, visit PartnerGrants and click on "Register Here."
 - Note that the organization's City of Austin Vendor number is required to complete registration in PartnerGrants.

Offeror Initial Steps: Pre-Application

3. Complete an Annual Agency Threshold Application in the PartnerGrants database.
 - This form must be submitted once per 12 months and remains valid for all competitions closing within that time period. The threshold application will be reviewed by APH staff, and the agency will be notified once approved.
 - Once logged into PartnerGrants, click on "Opportunity" and then opportunity title "Annual Agency Threshold Application-Applicants for Funding Start Here" to complete a new threshold application.
 - Submit one per agency per 12-months and note the submission date for future use.

4. Complete an **Intent to Apply form** for each proposal the Offeror plans to submit by the due date identified in Form 1 – Offer Sheet.
 - Once logged into PartnerGrants, click on “Opportunity” and then opportunity title “RFP 2023-00X Personal Attendant Pilot” and complete an Intent to Apply form including a Threshold Certification verifying completion of Step 3 above.
 - Offerors may submit more than one Intent to Apply form and must submit a unique Intent to Apply form for each proposal per the guidelines of the RFP.