



CCSM Issues Development Subcommittee Board Approved 08-23-2024 MH Peer Center Request for Proposals (RFPs)

The Issue:

In the wake of two RFP cycles that included the first round of two RFPs that were pulled, there is clearly a disconnect between the OBH state provided RFP criteria and what is written by potential peer authors. If we truly want a peer-written RFP, we need to do more for center managers and staff to build their capacity to write correctly what the State is requesting. Additionally, standardized training around the RFP process is needed. Due to the lack of this training, often center staff go through intense emotions attached to whether they receive an awarded contract. This negatively impacts center leadership and takes them away from engaging in the actual work of the center.

A compounding factor is that center umbrella agencies may not want to bid on these services going forward, if the process is too cumbersome for their RFP team and with uncertain outcomes.

We want to thank the team at OBH for their work on the RFP's and we want to recognize that the issues that cause these are not always in their control.

Recommendations:

1. Build into the pre-RFP stage an RFI (Request for Information). We suggest that OBH staff then give standardized training across peer centers that would support them in their ability to write and adhere to RFP requirements. Overall, this would help build future capacity for the RFP process and promote collaboration between peer centers and umbrella agencies
 2. Simplify the RFP writing requirements and dovetail that with more on-site review of what is happening in centers. For example, pair each RFP section with prompts reflecting the associated evaluation criteria.
 3. There needs to be more timely releases of RFPs.
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4. Consult national content experts for assists with writing/scoring RFPs.
 5. If an RFP is not awarded, but OBH is re-issuing said RFP then feedback should be shared with the centers to give guidance on where they could improve.
 6. More effort should be put into the contracting process for awards to be granted in a timely manner.
 7. Building peer leadership capacity for future writing of RFPs and articulating the work they are doing well. This should also include prospective agencies. Then contribute to the development of peer leadership capacity by implementing an RFP process as proposed above.

Expected Outcomes:

We want all mental health peer recovery centers to have the skills and resources needed to write successful RFPs, reducing stress from unawarded grants. This would be a win-win for both the State and peer recovery centers moving forward.
