



Request for Proposals for  
Integrating Workforce Development and  
Employment for Austin / Travis County's  
Homelessness Response System

Responses Due:  
May 10, 2024, by  
11:59pm CST

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## **Statement of Need**

The Ending Community Homelessness Coalition (ECHO) is soliciting responses from qualified persons/organizations with demonstrated capacity and experience to develop a plan regarding the integration and advancement of workforce development and employment support into the Homelessness Response System (HRS). The majority of individuals experiencing homelessness and enrolling into supportive housing have either no income or very limited income. This, coupled with an affordable housing shortage, greatly impacts people who have experienced homelessness to be able to obtain and maintain housing, healthcare, and other basic needs. While there are existing workforce development and employment support organizations within the greater community, their integration and coordination within the HRS are insufficient. Thus, people who are currently or formerly experiencing homelessness have inequitable access to support for increasing income.

## **About ECHO**

ECHO is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that serves as the Austin / Travis County Continuum of Care (CoC) Lead Agency, CoC Collaborative Applicant, Coordinated Entry System manager, and local Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) database administrator. We are tasked with planning and coordinating community-wide strategies to end homelessness in the Austin / Travis County region. We work in collaboration with people with lived experience of homelessness, community nonprofits, and government agencies to coordinate services and housing resources for the people who are experiencing homelessness in our community. We use research and evidence-based practices to advocate for the resources to bring the local Homelessness Response System (HRS) to scale and meet our community's goal of ending homelessness.

## **Project Overview**

In February of 2024, the Austin/Travis County's HRS Leadership Council approved to include workforce development as a priority in the 2023 – 2024 HRS Governance Roadmap and establish written standards. As a response to this and ECHO's commitment to systems advancement, ECHO will coordinate and engage with partner(s) to provide consulting and capacity building to support workforce development/employment (WFD) within the HRS.

## **Scope of Services**

### *Scope of Work*

Below is a list of expected activities, which may include but are not limited to, the following scope of services:

1. Develop an understanding of current workforce development and employment supports available to participants in the Austin/Travis County HRS.
2. Research other Continuum of Care's (COC) WFD program policies and best practices.
3. Engage local stakeholders in WFD for input on best practices. Stakeholders to include,

but not limited to:

- People with lived experience of homelessness
  - WFD providers
  - Homeless and Housing service providers
  - CoC governance
4. Provide recommendations about how to best integrate WFD into the Austin/Travis County HRS.
  5. Support the process and the drafting of written standards for the Austin/Travis County WFD and supported employment.

### Project Deliverables

Below is a list of expected project deliverables:

1. Identify and provide training materials and resources for stakeholders involved in implementing WFD, including CoC providers and HRS governance.
2. Provide a comprehensive proposal of how to best integrate WFD and Supported Employment in Austin/Travis County's HRS. The proposal should include:
  - Best practices in WFD, with a particular focus on communities with similar demographics or attributes to Austin/Travis County
  - Recommendation of how to scale WFD supports in the HRS, including through leveraging existing WFD resources and/or the creation of new partnerships or programs
  - Recommendations on if/how WFD should be integrated into Coordinated Entry system
  - Recommendations on how to engage with systems/institutions that intersect with WFD (i.e. – criminal justice, childcare)
  - Establish a framework for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness and impact of implemented workforce development initiatives
3. In collaboration with ECHO staff, create and implement Written Standards for WFD.
  - Written standards must be presented to HRS governance for collaboration, feedback, and implementation.

### **Request for Proposals Details**

#### Submission Guidelines

**All proposal items must be submitted by 11:59 PM CST on May 10, 2024** to: [jasonphillips@austinecho.org](mailto:jasonphillips@austinecho.org). If you would like to submit a hard copy of the proposal, please email us at the same email address to let us know and ask for a physical address.

Proposal narrative must be submitted in Microsoft Word or PDF format and should not be longer than 8 pages.

Respondents should include the following:

1. A cover letter, which provides the name, mailing address, telephone number, and email address of the individual who is the main point of contact. The cover letter should clearly state that the proposal is in response to this Request for Proposal.
2. Organization/consultant background
  - Provide 1-2 paragraphs describing organization's or consultant's background, core values, and areas of expertise.
3. Your and your organization's (if applicable) experience designing and developing proposals similar to the project described in this RFP.
4. Any additional expertise that will inform this work, including WFD/employment supports and/or projects focused on integrating systems/services into the homelessness response system.
5. Any anticipated challenges to the implementation of the Scope of Work.
6. If proposal includes multiple roles/staff, provide a description of the anticipated roles and relevant background of any key staff that will work directly on this project. Describe their experience and qualifications as they relate to the program as described in this RFP, and their prior experience for similar projects.
7. A budget for proposed evaluation activities. The budget should include a rationale for all proposed fees and costs.
8. At least three names and contact information of individuals who can describe the capacity and experience of the applicant/organization related to projects of similar scope.

Only one proposal will be accepted from any one organization or consultant. Multiple organizations may form a team for this application but should clearly identify the lead organization and the anticipated role(s) for each partner organization. All costs incurred in the preparation and presentation of the submitted proposal shall be wholly absorbed by the prospective contractor. Any material submitted by the prospective contractor that is to be considered confidential must be clearly marked as such.

### Selection Process

All proposals will be reviewed and evaluated by a selection committee. In addition, ECHO will be conducting interviews with top candidates.

### Inquiries and Point of Contact

ECHO is serving as the point of contact for inquiries related to this RFP. All questions/inquiries regarding this RFP may be directed to Jason Phillips at [jasonphillips@austinecho.org](mailto:jasonphillips@austinecho.org).

### Evaluation Timeline

The overall project timeline is contingent on several factors but is expected to be launched in June 2024 and completed by December 2024.

Process Steps and Timeline

RFP issued	April 12, 2024
Applications Due	May 10, 2024
Notification to top candidates and interviews scheduled	May 20, 2024
Expected selection of evaluator completed	By June 7, 2024

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging Statement:

The Ending Community Homelessness Coalition (ECHO) values diversity, equity, and inclusion in every aspect of our work, including our internal operations and external activities to support our mission. We are committed to cultivating a culture of respect for the dignity and value of each individual and family accessing the Homelessness Response System. These values are essential to our mission focused on leading and aligning a coalition to administer an effective Homelessness Response System, centered in racial equity, informed by the needs and expertise of people experiencing homelessness, and accountable to systemically marginalized communities. We welcome all. ECHO does not discriminate against any applicants because of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, veteran status, physical or mental disability, or age. Women, minorities, veterans, people with lived experience of homelessness, and other diverse populations are encouraged to apply.