READI CHICAGO
Rapid Employment and Development Initiative

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI)

*COMMUNITY-BASED OUTREACH PARTNERS
*TRANSITIONAL JOBS PROVIDERS

April 10, 2017
SUMMARY

Our city is in crisis. Between 2015 and 2016, Chicago experienced 58 percent more homicides and 43 percent more non-fatal shootings. This surge in gun violence is concentrated in a small number of disadvantaged communities on our South and West Sides. Despite containing only nine percent of Chicago’s population, just five of 77 community areas accounted for 32 percent of homicides in 2016, up from 25 percent in 2015.

Heartland Alliance and the University of Chicago’s Poverty and Crime Labs are exploring opportunities to partner with community-based organizations and transitional job agencies to implement a new initiative designed to reduce gun violence involvement for Chicagoans at elevated risk. **We are currently seeking funding from the philanthropic community to support this initiative. Implementation and scale is dependent on funding commitments.**

Violence takes an enormous toll on communities. In particular, living in high-violence communities increases individuals’ risk of becoming involved in gun violence, particularly for young men. We believe that connecting people at highest risk for gun violence involvement, hereafter referred to as program participants, to critical services – including transitional jobs, coaching, and cognitive behavioral therapy – has the potential to save lives and strengthen our communities.

Further, we believe that rigorously evaluating this model can strengthen the small but growing body of evidence that cities can draw from to keep our communities safe.

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

We have designed a program, Rapid Employment and Development Initiative (READI Chicago), and we invite you to indicate your interest in and capacity for partnering with us in providing Community-Based Outreach or Transitional Jobs Placement and Supports to individuals who are at high risk of being a victim or perpetrator of gun violence.


We will hold a Q&A session on Wednesday, April 19, 2017, from 9am until 10am at Heartland Alliance, 208 S. LaSalle, 13th Floor. Please RSVP to readichicago@heartlandalliance.org, and submit your questions readichicago@heartlandalliance.org by Monday, April 17th. All questions and answers will be circulated electronically to all potential applicants.

Pilot partner selection will be completed in May; organizations will be invited to join a pilot in July 2017. We will also review responses to this RFI to select additional partners, post-pilot period. All selection decisions are dependent on receipt of funding. Upon selection, Heartland Alliance will set up community meetings with selected partners.

PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

READI Chicago will serve Chicagoans at elevated risk of gun violence involvement. We anticipate that most participants will be men in their 20s and 30s on Chicago’s South and West Sides with prior criminal justice involvement. All participants will be at least 18 years old.

Participants will be identified through multiple channels, including referrals from community-based organizations and transitional jobs providers, administrative data, and individuals reentering the community from the Illinois Department of Corrections and the Cook County Sheriff’s Office.

ABOUT READI CHICAGO

READI Chicago will offer participants up to three years of intensive support, including:
• up to three months of CBT pre-release for participants in correctional settings and with all participants throughout transitional employment;
• up to one year of engagement with community-based organizations specializing in outreach;
• up to 18 months of subsidized transitional employment, coaching, and case management services; and,
• six months of follow-up support to promote lasting pro-social behaviors and engagement with the workforce.

Core programmatic components include:

**Relentless engagement**
Community-oriented engagement is central to READI Chicago. To recruit and support Chicagoans at elevated risk of gun violence involvement, we will partner with experienced community-based organizations. In addition, we will partner with organizations that work with individuals in the criminal justice system.

**Transitional jobs**
Participants will be invited to join work crews in sectors with few barriers to employment such as construction, warehousing, landscaping, and urban farming—and receive extensive support from on-the-job supervisors. For up to 18 months, they will work up to four days per week at a wage of not less than $12 per hour, and participate in CBT, coaching, and other services and supports on a fifth day (through stipends paid at the same wage amount).

**Coaching and case management**
Upon agreeing to take on a transitional job, READI Chicago participants will work with a coach who will provide job coaching and case management support. After completing their jobs, participants can continue with case management and coaching to aid the transition to stable, unsubsidized employment.

**Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)**
CBT principles and approaches will be infused throughout the READI Chicago participant experience. All participants will participate in CBT meetings concurrently with their transitional job; regular participation will be a condition of continued employment. Participants who are currently incarcerated may have an opportunity to participate in CBT meetings pre-release. Our CBT programming will be grounded in evidence-based curricula.

**Trauma-informed care**
We understand that every program participant will have experienced trauma—likely multiple traumas. As such, trauma-informed service delivery is central to the program model. By this, we mean that all READI Chicago staff will be trained on the impact of trauma and understand paths for recovery; recognize the signs and symptoms of trauma; fully integrate knowledge about trauma into practice; and seek to actively resist re-traumatization.

**Community capacity-building**
Heartland Alliance is committed to ensuring that community-based organizations are stronger as a result of participating in READI Chicago, and have greater capacity to serve this population in the future. Capacity-building efforts will include training and education of staff in partner organizations, and tailored administrative and programmatic support.

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**ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Community-based outreach agencies are responsible for implementing street outreach and engagement. READI Chicago outreach workers will each carry a caseload of no more than 15 participants. Caseloads will include the random assignment of community referrals and individuals identified through administrative data. Outreach managers will be funded as well, and will be responsible for supervising outreach workers and managing the outreach and engagement work. At READI Chicago’s peak, an outreach organization could serve up to 120
participants at a time. Adequate funding and capacity-building support will be provided.

**Transitional jobs agencies** will implement transitional job placement and support. Heartland Alliance will identify work crew opportunities. At transitional jobs agencies, crew chiefs will each carry a caseload of no more than 10 participants. Crew managers will be funded as well, and will be responsible for supervising crew chiefs and coordinating the work crews. Coaches – whose responsibilities include job coaching and case management – will each carry a caseload no more than 15 participants. Senior coaches will be funded as well, and will be responsible for supervising coaches and managing the coaching and case management efforts. At READI Chicago’s peak, a transitional jobs organization could serve up to 200 participants at a time. READI Chicago aims to adequately fund agencies to implement this structure and will also provide capacity-building support.

**Outreach and transitional jobs organizations** will contract with Heartland Alliance, recruit and supervise staff to deliver services, participate in ongoing training, comply with research requirements, collaborate, and accommodate co-location when possible. Further, contracted agencies will agree to provide timely financial reports with appropriate supporting documentation that can be reconciled against an approved budget.

**Heartland Alliance** will serve as the coordinating agency, fiscal sponsor, fundraising lead, and employer of record. We will also secure transitional job opportunities, support and coordinate worksites, lead and coordinate training, lead capacity-building efforts and technical assistance; and provide safety and logistics support.

**The Crime and Poverty Labs** will work in partnership with Heartland Alliance to design and administer the implementation and impact evaluations, manage participant selection, collect and analyze data related to programmatic outcomes, and disseminate information to key stakeholders.

**CORE COMMITMENTS**

In submitting an application, we are asking our partners to make these commitments:

1. **Promote human dignity and empower participants**
   - Offer care in a manner that values participants’ dignity and eliminates shame, humiliation, and stigma;
   - Build on the strengths each participant offers, recognizing that these strengths have helped our participants survive loss and trauma;
   - Recognize that people marginalized by high-risk behaviors have the right to access services and be treated with dignity and respect;
   - Acknowledge participants’ resilience as trauma survivors, while supporting and building upon these adaptive skills; and,
   - Recognize how oppression affects participants and strive to create relationships and opportunities that promote equity and freedom from fear, and rebalance the power dynamic between participants and staff or perceived authority figures.

2. **Implement the program model with fidelity, which may entail significant changes to current approaches**
   - Partner with Heartland Alliance and other READI Chicago partner organizations to inform and refine the program design;
   - Adhere to program design and be ready to adapt key features when needed;
   - Relentlessly engage with participants, including making thorough and ongoing
efforts to engage (and re-engage) all participants in transitional jobs;

• Accept that setbacks are part of the work;

• Celebrate and share successes and lessons;

• Adhere to participant caseload ratio of no more than 1:15 for outreach workers and coaches, and no more than 1:10 for crew chiefs, which may necessitate reallocating current staff and/or recruiting new staff;

• Ensure that all READI Chicago program staff participate in required training and education, including trauma-informed care, Motivational Interviewing, and CBT;

• Participate in technical assistance and capacity-building activities; and,

• Submit regular progress reports.

3. Participate in rigorous implementation and impact evaluations

• Complete required data collection and documentation, respond to data requests, including interviews, observations, and surveys of participants and staff, and maintain detailed records;

• For outreach organizations, receive and respond to updates in the READI Chicago candidate list; and,

• Comply with the research design, including random assignment.

4. Coordinate with community-based organizations and transitional jobs agencies in the READI Chicago network

• Participate in regular staffing meetings for shared participants;

• Provide access to complete records, case notes, data, and other information to other providers for shared participants;

• Promptly communicate any knowledge of potential conflicts involving participants that may affect the safety of participants, staff, or worksites; and,

• Facilitate participant safety, retention, and success.

5. Coordinate with other service providers

• Build and maintain local referral partnerships for services beyond project scope, e.g., healthcare, housing, etc.; and,

• Coordinate with and help identify local providers of educational, life skills, and job readiness services such as GED preparation, fatherhood, etc.

YOUR APPLICATION

Applications should include a cover sheet, a narrative, and supporting documents.

1. Cover sheet (1 page, 12 point font)

a. Please share your organization, contact name and title, street address, city, zip code, and email address.

b. Please share your fiscal agent information (if applicable): organization, contact name and title, street address, city, zip code, and email address.

c. Are you applying to be a community-based outreach organization and/or a transitional jobs provider?

d. Please share your organization’s mission and a summary of key activities.

e. In what communities are you currently working, and what is the extent of your work in each of these communities? Please explain how you selected these communities for service.

f. Please describe proposed community/ies to be served. If this represents a new community area for your organization, share your rationale for expansion. If you are a transitional
job agency with city-wide reach, please share communities served in 2016.

g. Are you currently engaged with any other organizations working to reduce gun violence, and are you currently submitting applications for other initiatives to reduce gun violence?

2. **Narrative (10 pages max, 12 point font)**
   a. Please describe your organizational philosophy and the values you bring to your work.
   
b. Please describe your organization’s experience and capacity in these areas, and include examples when possible:
      - community-based street outreach and engagement, and/or transitional jobs placement and support;
      - serving the target population, particularly individuals at elevated risk for gun violence involvement;
      - collaborating with community residents, community-based organizations, and other partners to deliver services and supports;
      - working with research and evaluation partners; and,
      - collaborating with the Chicago Police Department, IDOC, and CCSO.
   
c. Please describe current referral agencies that your organization uses, and the scope of services they provide.
   
d. When applicable, describe what you look for in outreach workers, coaches, case managers, and crew chiefs.
   
e. What professional development support do you provide for your staff?
   
f. Would your organization contribute to curricula and effective practices? If so, what areas of expertise would you be interested in sharing?

   g. Please describe your systems and processes to monitor progress toward financial and programmatic goals.
   
h. Please describe your systems and processes for data collection and management.
   
i. If applicable, describe an example when your organization received funding to implement an innovative program.
   
j. If applicable, describe an example when your organization implemented a program with significant support and guidance from a coordinating agency.
   
k. Please describe your current services:
      - How many staff do you currently have? How many staff are doing community outreach, violence intervention, case management, coaching, and transitional jobs management? Please also describe your current HR and finance staffing.
      - How many participants per year do you currently serve, and through which programs? What is their average length of engagement?
      - What impacts do you aim to achieve, and how do you capture impact?
   
l. Please describe your capacity to scale:
      - How many more participants could you serve in one year, if provided with additional funding?
      - Would your current HR and financial systems be able to absorb this increase, or would you need additional support in those areas?
      - Would you be willing and able to co-locate READI Chicago programming with a partner organization?
   
m. What data and other evidence would you suggest that community-based outreach organizations and/or
transitional jobs providers gather to enable collective, continuous learning?

n. Is there anything else we should know?

3. Supporting documents

a. Most recent 990s, from last two years
b. Current number of employees by status (full-time, part-time, interns)
c. Current organizational chart
d. Executive director resume and bio
e. List of Board of Directors, including affiliations
f. Evidence of incorporation or proposed efforts toward incorporation
g. Evidence of tax exemption or efforts toward tax exempt status

SELECTION CRITERIA

Submissions will be evaluated by Heartland Alliance, the Crime and Poverty Labs, and subject matter experts. Applications will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Demonstrated readiness to work with high-risk program participants
- Service to communities with a high concentration of gun violence
- Relevant expertise and experience in community-based outreach and engagement, or transitional jobs placement and support
- Demonstrated willingness to:
  - implement the READI Chicago model with fidelity
  - actively participate in a collaborative effort within and across communities
  - ensure staff participate in intensive, ongoing training and support
  - participate in a rigorous evaluation

ABOUT US

Since 1888, Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Human Rights has advanced the human rights and responded to the human needs of society’s most vulnerable through direct service, research, and policy change.

The University of Chicago Crime Lab is a privately-funded, independent and non-partisan academic research center founded in 2008 to help cities identify the most effective and humane ways to control crime and violence and reduce the harms associated with the administration of criminal justice.

The University of Chicago Poverty Lab was founded to apply rigorous scientific research to the ongoing challenge of urban poverty and economic inequality. The Poverty Lab works with communities, nonprofits, and government agencies to discover the best policies and programs to alleviate economic hardship for the most disadvantaged.

i Parameters for participation have come from community stakeholders and from University of Chicago Crime Lab. (2017). Gun Violence in Chicago, 2016.
ii Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)