

**Request for Technical Assistance Proposals:
Training and Technical Assistance Services for Pay
for Success Projects**

Issued September 19, 2017

Request for Proposals Executive Summary

The Urban Institute launched the Pay for Success Initiative (PFSI) in 2015 to strengthen the role of evidence in pay for success (PFS) projects. The goals of Urban's PFSI training and technical assistance (TTA) are to help communities implement strong, successful PFS projects that expand the evidence base for different interventions; increase communities' capacities to make informed choices about evaluation and evaluation design; and support improved social outcomes by encouraging increased outcomes-based decisionmaking in communities across the country.

This request for proposals (RFP) is designed to further those efforts by providing pro bono TTA around PFS to communities across the country. This application is available to government agencies and service providers that are actively involved in a PFS project. The application opens on September 19, 2017, and will remain open until October 31, 2017. Urban anticipates making 5–7 TTA awards as a result of this RFP.

Services Offered

Urban offers services such as stakeholder engagement, assistance with data access, collection and analysis, intervention design, and evaluation design. These services are designed to strengthen PFS projects by supporting the development of evidence-based interventions and rigorous, accurate evaluations. Work plans will be tailored to the needs of TTA recipients.

Timeline

Applications are due October 31, though Urban strongly suggests that applicants signal their interest in applying by filling out a [brief Google form](#) by October 1. Throughout November, Urban will have in-depth conversations with finalists before announcing final decisions the week of December 4. Service provision will start immediately.

RFP Schedule

The release, application, and application review process for the RFP will follow the schedule below.

| Date | Item | Comment |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| September 19 | Urban Institute publishes the RFP. | The RFP is available on Urban's website here . |
| September 19 – October 17 | Open question period | Applicants may submit questions about the RFP to askpfsi@urban.org . Questions will be answered within five business days. |
| September 26, 2:00 pm ET | Informational webinar | The Pay for Success Initiative will host and record an informational RFP webinar that will include opportunities for participant questions. The recording will be posted within one week of the webinar date. Registration is available here . Attendance at the webinar is optional . |
| October 1 | Letter of interest due | Letter of interest (strongly recommended) is due and is available here . It should take 1–2 minutes to complete. Urban will use the letter of interest to gauge demand for its services. |
| October 31 | Applications due | All applications are due to askpfsi@urban.org . |
| November 1 – 13 | Application review period | Urban reviews submitted applications. |
| November 13 – 22 | Finalist calls | Urban calls finalists to gather more information and discuss immediate next steps. Finalist calls are also an opportunity for finalists to ask questions. |
| Week of December 4 | Announcement of grantees | Selected applicants are notified via e-mail; engagement begins immediately. |

Request for Technical Assistance Proposals

This RFP offers communities pro bono TTA from the Urban Institute's PFSI to help strengthen PFS projects by supporting the development of evidence-based interventions and rigorous, accurate evaluations. Urban offers services such as stakeholder engagement, assistance with data access, collection and analysis, intervention design, and evaluation design. Work plans can easily be tailored to the needs of the site. Sample services are spelled out more specifically on pages 2–4 of this RFP. Through this RFP, however, Urban offers only in-kind TTA.

Pay for Success

PFS is an innovative financing mechanism that shifts financial risk from a traditional funder (usually government) to an external, often private investor. The investor provides up-front capital to scale an evidence-based social program to improve outcomes for a vulnerable population. If an independent evaluation shows that the program achieved the agreed-upon outcomes, the investment is repaid with interest by the traditional funder. If not, the investor takes a loss. By prioritizing outcomes, performance management, evidence, and the strategic deployment of resources, PFS has the potential to improve delivery of social services to vulnerable populations, yielding benefits to individuals, governments, and society at large.

Eligibility to Apply for Training and Technical Assistance

Urban welcomes applications from **(1) local and state government agencies or (2) for-profit or non-profit service provider organizations** that are actively involved in a PFS project. One of these two types of stakeholders must be the primary applicant, though Urban strongly encourages projects where other stakeholders are involved (e.g., investors, intermediaries, evaluators). Applicants must demonstrate commitment from an end payor (i.e. local government or other organization) to be considered for TTA. Commitment from an end payor is determined through a letter of commitment and other factors such as provision of access to data, previous demonstration of PFS work, and dedicated end-payor staff time.

Other partners (e.g., intermediaries, evaluators, etc.) involved in a selected project, even if they are not the prime applicant, are also eligible to receive services from PFSI to accomplish project goals. Urban will work with the applicant and its partner organizations to ensure its TTA efforts are complementary to the work of other stakeholders on the project.

There are no restrictions on the type of intervention or issue area for this RFP. If you have any questions about your project's eligibility, please contact Urban at askpfsi@urban.org for guidance.

Examples of applicants that would be a good fit for this RFP include

- a permanent supportive housing provider that serves homeless individuals looking to expand its services that is partnered with a city looking to discern who most needs such services

(based on vulnerability and public cost), what additional supports should be provided to this new population, and what outcomes make sense to measure for this population; or

- a county working with an intermediary on an early childhood initiative that needs help planning and writing an evaluation design for the final PFS contract.

Urban TTA has been used as matching funds for other PFS competitions (e.g., the Corporation for National and Community Service's Social Innovation Fund). If selected, Urban will work with sites to determine if this work is eligible to meet a match requirement.

Training and Technical Assistance the Urban Institute Provides

Tasks that Urban could work on with applicants are listed below, though the list is not exhaustive. For each task, both Urban and the selected sites will have defined responsibilities. Services will last between 3 and 12 months based on the needs of the site.

Stakeholder engagement: Urban can schedule check-in calls with partners, help facilitate evaluation-related conversations, work to engage all pertinent stakeholders in project development, and serve as an ongoing thought partner for decisions around evaluation and intervention selection.

Data access, collection, and analysis: Urban can work with partners to identify data relevant to their intervention or evaluation design method of choice. Urban can also help partners write data use agreements, decipher trends in local data, and determine what data needs to be collected for evaluation purposes.

Intervention design and selection: Urban can help identify evidence-based interventions to include in a PFS project. Urban can also research the evidence base behind the interventions being used in the project and analyze local data to determine the size and characteristics of the target population.

Evaluation design services: Urban specializes in building understanding and buy-in around rigorous evaluation designs. Other key evaluation tasks Urban can assist with include

- suggesting primary and secondary outcomes for the project,
- developing an evaluation design,
- addressing ethical considerations around the evaluation process,
- validating cost assumptions from cost-benefit modeling,
- assisting with the design of referral and enrollment pathways based on the project design, and
- providing an evaluation options memo weighing costs and benefits of various options.

Evaluation education services: These services are often included as part of evaluation design work. Examples of these services include conducting webinars and providing written materials or memos on different evaluation designs and their tradeoffs.

Exclusions from Urban’s TTA model: Urban services provided through this RFP will **not** include implementing the actual PFS evaluation (i.e. launching the evaluation, recruiting clients, tracking outcome data), contract writing, investor recruitment or cost savings predictions. Urban can provide referrals to organizations to assist with these tasks.

If selected, the type of services provided, to whom, and how long they will be provided for will be based on the information in the applicant’s application, conversations between Urban and the recipient, and an initial needs-assessment period. These services will then be codified in a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between Urban and the TTA recipient.

Qualities of a Strong Application

Urban is interested in serving a diverse group of sites through this RFP. However, Urban believes that certain applicant characteristics will ensure sites get the most value possible out of their engagement with Urban.

Project progress: Applicants that can demonstrate progress on their PFS project will be scored more highly than those at the very beginning of the planning process. There are several ways projects can show progress. This includes documentation of any previous planning or feasibility work that includes at least one other partner, presence of MOUs or other agreements between project partners, engagement of an intermediary partner, or internal reports or documents showing evidence of PFS planning. If you are unsure how to document PFS project progress, please reach out to askpfsi@urban.org.

Strong partnerships: Urban will also expect sites to have at least one other partner (e.g. an intermediary, university, data center, local government, evaluator, or investor) involved in the project, and applicants with more than one engaged partner will be scored more highly. Sites that can bring committed partners to their engagement with Urban are much more likely to make progress that will last beyond the life of this engagement. All partners will be expected to contribute a staff person’s time to work on the project or guarantee access to data as part of the project. Urban strongly recommends all partner agencies provide letters of support for the prime applicant’s application.

Commitment from an end payor is especially important. End payors are the entity or entities that will repay investors if the project is successful and are often (but not always) government agencies (at any level) or health plans. Demonstrated past and ongoing commitment to the project will be gauged through a combination of a letter of commitment to deep exploration or to paying for a project (required), evidence of past or current end-payor engagement in planning or feasibility work on the same project, or presence of a repayment mechanism (such as a sinking fund). Sites with multiple pieces of evidence of end payor commitment and a dedicated project manager will be scored more highly than those with just letters of support.

Potential social impact: Partners should be able to articulate the impact their project would have on vulnerable populations. Projects that can clearly identify a vulnerable population that will be positively impacted by this project will be scored more highly than those who have not yet identified one.

Demonstrated need: Urban wants to support those communities that most need and are most likely to benefit from its services within the time frame of available services (3–12 months). Projects that are far enough along where Urban’s input is unlikely to have an impact are encouraged to contact Urban’s [Ask an Expert](#) desk. Projects that would need longer than 12 months of services in the categories above are also not a good fit given Urban’s current resources.

Expectations of Selected Training and Technical Assistance Applicants

Urban sees its role as an evaluation advisor and TTA provider, supplementing the work of other stakeholders on the project. Urban will work with each selected site to determine how best to assist its individual project. Urban will also be responsible for identifying appropriate subject matter experts for each project, adequately staffing work teams, carrying out all items discussed in the scope of work, returning all partner communications in a timely fashion, and providing copies of all work products related to the TTA to its partners for review.

Urban will look to partner agencies to provide on-the-ground expertise about the intervention and the local issue area being addressed. For the partnership to be successful, Urban will also ask partner agencies to

- identify a point of contact who will be in regular contact with Urban, help schedule conference calls and meetings, and support needs on site visits;
- provide access to data relevant for TTA goals (e.g. potential target population, costs, and budgets);
- provide access to existing PFS cost models;
- review draft materials and provide feedback; and
- connect Urban to other key stakeholders on the project.

Additional expectations of Urban and TTA recipients will be codified in the MOU.

About the Application Process

Finalist Calls

The finalist calls allow Urban to make the most informed selection decisions possible by collecting additional information from applicants about their projects. Urban can gather more detail about information shared in the application, hear from other project partners besides the primary applicant about their roles, and discuss Urban's sample MOU. Finalists will also be able to use this time to ask Urban questions about the application process and learn more about potential TTA services. Finalists are expected to be on the call with as many partner agencies as possible. Urban may also contact intermediary partners separately (if already engaged) to get more insight into the project.

A sample MOU will be provided to all finalists before the call and discussed as part of the finalist call. Finalists will be asked to review it and prepare to raise any potential issues or questions during the call in order to expedite the process of signing if they are selected. Urban will work closely with applicants and their contracting staff to ensure the MOUs (which are not legally binding) work well for all parties involved.

Next Steps after Applicants Are Selected

If an applicant's site is selected, Urban will work with it on the following immediate next steps:

- planning and scheduling a project kickoff call with key stakeholders
- determining key members of the initial planning team
- conducting a more detailed review of site need using Urban's [Project Assessment Tool](#)
- devising a more detailed work plan for engagement
- developing and signing an MOU between the two agencies
- scheduling a first site visit

How Applicants Should Prepare and Submit Applications

Please send a copy of the application in PDF format to askpfsi@urban.org. All applications should be typed. All application pages should be single-spaced, include page numbers, and answer all relevant questions. The application length should not exceed 7 pages including the cover page and narrative (but not including letters of support and other add-on materials).

How Urban Will Notify Applicants of a Decision

Applicants will be notified of a decision on their application via e-mail from kwalker@urban.org. Applicants who are selected will have one week to confirm their interest in moving forward.

RFP for Technical Assistance Application

This is the application for TTA services. Part A, the cover page of the application, collects information about the applicant. Part B collects more detailed project information along the criteria outlined on page 5 of this document, in the RFP summary. Applications (excluding attachments) should be no longer than **six single-spaced pages**. Applicants should answer all questions in Parts A and B in one document separate from this application. Responses should be sent in PDF format. Instructions on approximate length and format for each section are included below.

Applications are due by 5:00 pm ET on October 31. Full applications must include Parts A and B as well as a letter of support from an end payor to be considered. Additional attachments applicants may want to include are detailed at the end of the application form on page 9 of this document.

Part A: Applicant Information Cover Page (1-page maximum)

Provide bullet points with the following information:

- agency or organization name
- agency or organization location (city, county, and state):
- type of applicant (local government, state government, or service provider)
- applicant primary point of contact, including name, title, agency or organization (must be same as applicant), phone number, and e-mail address

PART B: Project Information Narrative (6-page maximum)

1. Project Information and Progress

Provide a summary of the project (topic or problem area, key partners, desired outcomes, vulnerable populations affected, etc.) and information on PFS project planning progress. This should include information on when planning for this deal started, major milestones, activities, or accomplishments so far, and immediate next steps you believe need to be addressed to keep the project moving forward. Attach any previous work, front and signature pages of contracts or MOUs between partners, or internal reports or documents showing evidence of PFS planning to the application. The narrative should be **3 pages or less**. Use the following questions as prompts for this section:

- What is the target population, including approximate size and defining characteristics (e.g., chronic homelessness, mothers on Medicaid)?
- What is the desired timeline for project launch (if it has not launched already)?
- What interventions have been selected for the project? What services providers have committed to the project?
- What outcomes is the project hoping to attain?

- Is an evaluator already attached to the project? Has an evaluation design been agreed upon? If so, please provide details and explain how Urban could still be useful to the project.

2. Project Partnerships

Please create a table with the same headings as the example below that lists any partners your agency is engaging with as part of this PFS project. Typical partners include investors (foundations, financial institutions, etc.), service providers, and independent evaluators. For all intermediaries listed, please specify their exact role in the project under Partner Type. Attach letters of support to the end of this application. Please also indicate the name of the staff person at each agency dedicated to this project.

Strong applications will have a letter of support from every partner listed, though this is not required.

| Name of agency | Partner type | Letter of support included? (Y/N) | Name of dedicated staff member |
|------------------|---|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| State University | Evaluator | Y | Jane Doe |
| Social Finance | Intermediary – providing project management and transaction structuring support | Y | Ann Doe |

After the table, include some narrative (**1.5 pages or less**) that describes the strength of your partnerships with a special focus on the end payor. State who the end payor is (both organization or agency name and main contact) and address the questions below. Attach proof of commitment (such as a letter or draft contract) to this application.

- Does the end payor have a staff person who will dedicate time to this project? If so, who? How much time will they dedicate per month (estimates are fine)?
- Does the end payor have access to data relevant to the project? If so, have they agreed to share it for the purposes of this project?
- Has the end payor actively engaged in previous planning or feasibility work on this project?
- Does the end payor has a dedicated repayment mechanism (a fund, for example) or a process to create one? If so, describe it.

Please also describe strategy for accessing data that may be needed for this project and which partners will assist in those efforts (e.g., end payor will provide access to the Homeless Management Information System to identify homeless families in our county).

3. Potential Social Impact

In a **half page or less**, describe the impact you hope your project will have on the community. Include information on who the project will benefit and how it will benefit them.

4. Desired Services

Describe the services or kinds of support you would want to receive from Urban, using the categories and bullet points on page 3 of this document as a starting point. Describe how these services could address existing project needs and barriers within 3 – 12 months. Provide as much detail as possible in **one page or less**. Please include any desired deadlines (e.g., evaluation design completed by June 2018).

Attachments

In addition to Parts A and B above, other attachments to this application should include the following:

- **Evidence of end payor support.** Letter of support from an end payor (required), documents revealing planning or feasibility work on the same project, or presence of a repayment mechanism (e.g., sinking fund)
- **Evidence of partner support.** Letters of support from partner agencies (strongly recommended)
- **Evidence of project progress.** Prior feasibility studies or documents showing project progress, notes or summaries of previous conversations on PFS, engagement of an intermediary partner, or internal reports or documents showing evidence of PFS planning
- **Other.** Annual reports (optional for service provider applicants)