



**Maryland Developmental  
Disabilities Council**

CREATING CHANGE • IMPROVING LIVES

June 26, 2023

Dear Applicants,

Greetings. We hope this letter finds you well and in good spirits.

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council (Council) is excited about this new opportunity. We want to increase access to the availability of information, resources, and training for people with developmental disabilities and their families in underserved communities across Maryland. To do this, we are inviting organizations and individuals with an organizational partner across Maryland to submit proposals to train and empower “cultural brokers” in specific communities. A cultural broker is a member of the community they work with. They build trust and connections between community members and the services and supports they need and want.

The Council creates change to make it possible for people with developmental disabilities to live the lives they want with the support they need. Our vision is that people with and without disabilities in Maryland live, learn, work, and play together. We know more needs to be done to support people and their families from specific communities to make this a reality. And we hope you can help.

We want all Marylanders with developmental disabilities and their families to have the same resources, opportunities, and support to advocate for themselves and live the lives they want. This project focuses on people who live in areas of high amounts of poverty and are African American, Black, Hispanic/Spanish/Latinx, or Asian-American. We know this is just a start, but with your partnership, we also know we can make a difference.

Thank you in advance for your interest in this project. It is the result of a long, thoughtful process by the Council. The following RFP documents provide the information you need to learn more and hopefully submit your proposal. We hope you will join us in this work.

With appreciation,

Kay Han  
Chair, Diversity Work Team

Dee Sapp  
Chair, Council

Rachel London  
Executive Director

## Request for Proposals (RFP) for Cultural Brokers in Maryland

**Proposals due August 7, 2023**

### 1. Overview

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council (Council) wants to increase access to the availability of information, resources, and training for people with developmental disabilities and their families in underserved communities across Maryland.

The Council seeks proposals from organizations to train and empower one or more cultural brokers to increase access and decrease barriers for people with developmental disabilities and their families in a designated underserved community. A cultural broker is a member of the community they work with. They build trust and connections between community members and the services and supports they need and want. In this project, the selected organization(s) will work with cultural brokers to build trust and connections in the community, and train and empower them to address the needs in their community.

The Council has identified the following communities to be the focus of this work. People with developmental disabilities and their families who:

- live in areas of concentrated poverty; and
- are historically underserved minorities (such as African American, Black, Hispanic/Spanish/Latinx, or Asian-American); and
- experience a lack of access to information and resources about developmental disabilities programs, services, and supports.

We use the term “selected community” to refer to these individuals. We are looking for applicants from organizations with existing relationships to a selected community.

The Council made \$150,000 available for cultural broker projects from October 1, 2023 -September 30, 2024. The Council anticipates funding up to three (3) organizations in the amount of \$50,000-\$75,000 each.

The Council wants information about our grants to be easy to read. We want this RFP to be as accessible to the community as possible. If there is an area that is unclear, please ask questions using the instructions provided below. See Section 14 for information on how to ask questions.

## **2. Background of this Grant**

The Council is a public policy organization that creates change to make it possible for people with developmental disabilities to live the lives they want with the support they need. Our vision is that people with and without disabilities in Maryland live, learn, work, and play together.

Every five years the Council develops a plan that guides our work. This is called our State Plan. It includes our most important goals and the activities we will work on to reach our goals. The State Plan is our road map for how we will accomplish these goals and use our resources. The current state plan is for 2022-2026 and identified increasing information, resources, and training to underserved communities by using cultural brokers as a priority area of the Council ([link to state plan](#)).

## **3. Purpose of the Grant**

While the Council developed the State Plan, we looked at different groups in Maryland who experience disparities. That means they are underserved or unserved compared to others. We saw a need to do more to support people with developmental disabilities and their families from underserved communities. We learned that one barrier for these communities is lack of access to information to know about services, programs, and supports. We learned that people of color, communities of people who do not speak English as their first or native language, and people living in areas with high levels of poverty have less access to information and resources about developmental disabilities services, programs and supports. We also reflected on the Council's history and determined that the Council needs to do more to understand, build relationships, and share resources with these communities.

With this information, we created a targeted disparity objective. This means our State Plan includes a goal to focus on people that are underserved or unserved compared to others. In our State Plan, Objective 2.3 says:

Increase the availability of information, resources, and training to people with developmental disabilities and their families from underserved communities. Focus on people who are African American, Black, Hispanic/Spanish/Latinx, or Asian-American living in areas with high amounts of poverty.

That objective is the focus of this grant. In the State Plan, strategy 2.3.5. explains how we will achieve this objective. This strategy is:

Train and empower a diverse group of cultural brokers to address the needs of people with developmental disabilities and their families in their communities.

In this project, the organization will work with cultural brokers to build trust and connections in the community, and train and empower them to address the needs in their community.

#### **4. What Kind of Work Will Be Supported by the Grant? (Scope of the Work)**

The Council seeks proposals from organizations to train and empower one or more cultural brokers to address the needs of people with developmental disabilities and their families in specific underserved communities in Maryland. All work that the cultural broker does with the specific selected community must meet the needs that people with developmental disabilities and their families say they need.

Examples of cultural broker activities are described below. Please do not limit your proposals to these examples. The Council values creativity, while still aligning with our mission to create change, and we offer examples to help generate ideas.

- **Identifying and building resources and skills to work with cultural broker(s)**

This area of work includes the actions taken to identify, train, and support cultural broker(s) from the selected community. This might include building relationships with a new cultural broker or deepening a relationship with an existing cultural broker. This also includes activities, such as building resources or skills, so the cultural broker and staff from the organization can work well together. This will help the cultural broker and staff from the organization make sure that they are able to complete the activities included in the proposal.

- **Sharing information with the selected community.**

This area of work includes connecting people with developmental disabilities and their families to local resources. This can include asking people with developmental disabilities and their families, from the selected communities, what information, resources, and training they need. Some examples of ways you can collect this information are: online surveys, town-hall meetings, and in-person surveys. This may also include interpretation and translation support for program materials. This should take into account the selected community's language, culture, and accessibility needs (for example: translation designed with feedback from community members for technical terms).

- **Improving relationships between the selected community and organization.**

The work to improve relationships can happen in many ways. Organizations may approach this work by deepening existing relationships in the selected community. Organizations might also approach this work by focusing on reaching more people in the selected community. Other organizations might use a combination of strategies. Examples of relationship-building activities

could include community-driven and community-designed activities to expand relationships between the selected community and the organization.

- **Improving relationships between the organization and selected community.**

This part of the work focuses on supporting the organization to be accountable to the selected community. When an organization is accountable, it means they get feedback from the community about the work they are doing. The feedback is used to make changes so the organization gets better at meeting the needs of the community. A cultural broker helps by mediating between the community and the organization. Mediating is when one person helps two sides understand each other better. When a person mediates, they do not take sides. They help find solutions for both sides fairly. A cultural broker can also help by sharing information about the selected community's strengths, needs, and barriers.

Organizations and cultural brokers are required to design activities that are responsive to the selected community's needs and strengths.

## **5. What are the Expected Outcomes from the Grant?**

The Council expects one or more of the following outcomes to be achieved:

- An increase in awareness and knowledge by people with developmental disabilities and their families in the identified underserved communities, and their families, of issues that matter to them.
- An increase of the number of people trained and empowered to be cultural brokers in the selected community.
- An increase of the number of communities that have the information, resources, and training needed for people with developmental disabilities and their families.
- An increase of the number of people with developmental disabilities and their families that are better able to advocate for what they need and want because of working with cultural brokers.
- An increase in understanding and resources in the organizations to meet the needs of people with developmental disabilities and their families in underserved communities.

## **6. Who Can Apply?**

Organizations and individuals may apply. The types of organizations that can apply are non-profit and for-profit organizations. Individuals interested must apply with a nonprofit or for-profit partner. They

will receive the funds for you, and together you will agree on how they will pay you for the work you do on this project. In this RFP, we refer to all of these as “organizations.”

Organizations led by people with lived experience with developmental disabilities, lived experience with poverty, and/or lived experience as racial, cultural, ethnic, or linguistic minorities are strongly encouraged to apply.

The Council values collaboration and welcomes joint proposals from organizations or individuals and organizations that wish to partner together for this project.

Applicants from rural areas are encouraged to apply. For this initiative, rural areas include: Garrett, Allegany and Washington Counties in Western Maryland; Charles, Calvert and St. Mary’s in Southern Maryland; and Caroline, Cecil, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne’s, Talbot, Wicomico, Worcester, and Somerset counties on the Eastern Shore of Maryland.

## 7. Proposal Instructions

- **Length.** Proposals may not exceed 12 pages, not including the budget and attachments.
- **Headings.** Include the headings, and the main question under each heading, in Appendix 1 and 2 throughout your proposal. Provide separate and distinct answers for each one.
- **Content.** Please try to make responses as accessible as possible. Proposals will be reviewed by a diverse team with a wide range of access needs. Please be as clear and straightforward as possible in your responses. Formal language is not necessary. We appreciate any efforts to submit proposals that are simple and easy to understand.
- **Format.** Number pages, double space, and only use one side of the page. Use font point size 11 or larger. Word and PDF files accepted.
- **Extra Documents.** Do not submit cover letters or any other attachment, except as listed in Section 8. They will not be reviewed.
- **Unallowable expenses.** Council funds cannot be used for: Activities that are already funded by other sources; activities that only benefit one individual or family; direct services for people with developmental disabilities (for example: services provided by a direct support professional); t-shirts, buttons, or similar items; social activities or events; or fundraising. The Council usually does not fund equipment.

## 8. What Must be Included in a Proposal?

A complete proposal includes responses the following areas.

- **General Information about the Organization.** See Appendix 1.

- **Responses to Council Questions.** See Appendix 2.
- **Costs for the Proposed Project.** Please use this template to share your budget ([Budget Form](#)). Instructions on how to complete the budget form are here ([Budget Form Instructions](#)).

## 9. How Much Money is Available?

The Council made \$150,000 available for cultural broker projects. The Council anticipates funding up to three (3) organizations in the amount of \$50,000-\$75,000 each. Funding is available October 1, 2023 – September 30, 2024.

## 10. What Do You Have to Contribute? (Matching Funds)

When the Council funds a grant, we can cover up to 75% of the total cost of the project. The organization receiving the grant is called the grantee. The grantee must provide at least 25% of the total cost of the project. This is called a match. The match can be money you or another organization provides to help pay for grant activities; and/or in-kind support, like donated meeting space, donated supplies and equipment, and volunteer time. Any in-kind support used as match must have a value directly related to the grant.

Organizations are required to have matching funds to receive a grant from the Council. These matching funds cannot be federal dollars. You have to provide 25% of the total project cost. This means 25% of the total cost of the project comes from the grantee and 75% from the Council.

For organizations in Baltimore City or Somerset County the match is 10%.

Additional information is available in the match instructions document ([Match Instructions](#)).

## 11. How Will Proposals Be Evaluated?

The criteria to evaluate each proposal are listed below in descending order of importance. That means when the proposal is evaluated, the first is most important. The Council will select the applicant or applicants with the most favorable evaluated proposal based on these criteria.

- **Overall:** The proposal and budget is comprehensive, feasible given time and resources, and demonstrates an understanding of all aspects of this project.
- **Relationship with Selected Community:** The proposal demonstrates existing positive connections with the applicant's selected community.
- **Community Accountability:** The proposal demonstrates clear plans to ensure the proposed activities reflect the needs identified by the community.

- **Proposed Project and Objectives:** The proposed project is detailed, comprehensive, and logical. The proposal is likely to achieve the desired outcomes of this initiative. There is a clear plan to meaningfully engage people with developmental disabilities and family members in the selected community in planning and implementation activities.
- **Qualification and Experience:** The proposal demonstrates relevant skills and experience that will support the success of the project.
- **Resources:** The responses to resource questions are feasible, and the organization possess the competencies necessary to effectively complete the scope of work.
- **Budget:** The budget is reasonable and likely will support successful completion of all proposed activities. Compensation for cultural brokers reflects a professional wage for the labor and contributions associated with the project.

## 12. What is the Selection Process?

Proposals will be reviewed in three rounds:

- First, proposals will be reviewed and evaluated by Council staff for completeness and eligibility.
- Second, complete proposals submitted by eligible potential organizations will be reviewed and evaluated by the Council's Diversity Work Team (DWT). [Note: After their review, the DWT may invite top applicants to an interview and/or reach out with any questions about proposals.]
- Third, the DWT will present their recommendations for selection to the full Council. The full Council will make the final decision.

## 13. What is the Project Timeline?

RFP Opens – June 26, 2023

Information Session – July 11, 2023

RFP Closes – August 7, 2023

Full Council Vote – September 21, 2023

Organizations notified – September 25, 2023

Project period begin – October 1, 2023

Project period ends – September 30, 2024



#### **14. When is the Information Session?**

There will be an information session to answer questions related to the proposal. Attendance at the information session is not mandatory. The information session is the only time to ask questions. A summary of the questions and answers will be available following the information session. The information will be posted to the Council's website.

#### **Zoom Information Session: Tuesday, July 11, 2023 at 11:30 am**

Please register for the information session using the following link. Once you register you will receive an email confirmation with the Zoom link.

[Link to register for information session registration.](#)

*If you encounter issues registering, please email or call Shawan Pearson, [spearson@md-council.org](mailto:spearson@md-council.org) or 410-767-6249.*

#### **15. Submission Instructions & Deadline**

To be considered, proposals must be received by Monday, August 7, 2023 by 12pm (noon). Email your proposal to the Council at [info@md-council.org](mailto:info@md-council.org).

*Important Note: Receipt of all proposals will be acknowledged by email or phone. If you do not receive confirmation by 2:00pm on August 7, 2023, contact Shawan Pearson at [spearson@md-council.org](mailto:spearson@md-council.org) or 410-767-6249. Applicants are responsible for ensuring the proposal is received.*

## 16. Submission Checklist

The following is a submission checklist to help with your review of the application. This list is not a substitute for information throughout this document. The checklist is a tool to help with finalizing your application materials.

- ✓ Written Responses
  - All responses, to questions in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2, have been compiled into a single document.
  - The document is 12 pages or less and follows the format outlined in Section 7.
  - Responses are easy to read and avoid jargon when possible.
  - Responses clearly identify the selected community for this project.
  - Responses explain the current relationship with the selected community.
  - There is a clear plan to meaningfully engage people with developmental disabilities and family members in the selected community in planning and implementation activities.
- ✓ Project Costs
  - Budget template has been completed along with justifications for each item.
  - Compensation for cultural brokers reflects a professional wage.
  - Budget includes the 25% match of the total cost of the project.
  - Budget **does not include** any unallowable expenses outlined in Section 7.

## Appendix 1. General Information about the Organization

Please provide written responses to each of the areas below. In your responses, please use the headings to support our review process.

### 1. Organization information.

- Provide the name and address of your organization.
- Provide the information for a point of contact (name, title, email and phone number).
- Please also share the organization's mission statement.

### 2. Statement of alignment. How does your organization's approach align with how the Council creates change? At the Council, our mission is to create change to make it possible for people with developmental disabilities to live the lives they want with the support they need. We create change using the following actions.

**We Lead:** we take bold steps to improve the lives of people with developmental disabilities. We help lead the way with new ideas.

**We Partner:** we bring together people with developmental disabilities, their family members, organizations, and others. Together we find solutions to problems and take action to bring about change.

**We Advise:** we are a trusted advisor to leaders in state government and the state legislature. We work with them to improve laws, policies, programs, and services.

**We Advocate:** we advocate for people with developmental disabilities to have the same opportunities in life that other members of the community have. We advocate for people to be included and supported so they are successful.

**We Inform:** we provide information and resources so people with disabilities and their families can understand their rights, increase their independence, and find the services and supports they need.

**We Empower:** we fund advocacy and leadership training. People with developmental disabilities and their family members learn how to effectively advocate for themselves and others.

**We Educate:** we help teachers, employers, and other community members understand developmental disabilities. Our goal is for them to welcome and include people with disabilities.

**We Find Solutions:** we use our funds to develop and test new ideas. We use what we learn to bring about change throughout Maryland.

## Appendix 2. Responses to Council Questions

Please provide written responses to each of the areas below. In your responses, please use the headings to support our review process.

1. **Qualification and Experience.** What skills, experiences, and lessons learned from past activities will support your team in this work? In your answer, please describe:
  - The services you provide to people with developmental disabilities and their family members.
  - The experience your organization brings to the proposed project.
  - The way your organization learns and adapts to projects, especially if your proposed project is in the beginning stages.

2. **Relationship with Selected Community.** What selected community (African American, Black, Hispanic/Spanish/Latinx, or Asian-American living in areas with high amounts of poverty) do you plan to serve through this grant? In your answer, please describe:
  - What you know about this community and why you selected them.
  - The history of your relationship with the selected community.

*[Note: For this grant opportunity, we expect a relationship to already be established between the organization and the selected community. If you do not have a current relationship with the selected community, please consider applying for a small grant from the Council to build relationships.]*

3. **Resources.** What are your organization's existing resources and skills to accomplish your proposed project? In your answer, please describe:
  - The knowledge, skills, key staff, existing funds, history, experience, staffing structure, and policies that will be used to support your proposed project.
  - Information about how the funds from this grant help your organization build or sustain the work you are proposing?
4. **Proposed Project and Objectives.** What are the details of the project you plan to do? In your answer, please describe:
  - How you have or how you will identify cultural brokers from the selected underserved community.
  - How you have or will train and empower the identified cultural brokers to provide support to the selected underserved community.
  - The ongoing support you will provide to cultural brokers throughout the duration of this grant and how you will know they have the support they need.
  - The kind of information and resources that will be provided by the cultural broker to the selected community

- How you will evaluate your progress to see if you are meeting your project objectives.
- The target scope of the project. How many cultural brokers do you aim to recruit? How many people with developmental disabilities and their family members in the selected community do you expect to serve through this grant? How will you measure an increase in information and resources to the selected community?

*Note: The Council anticipates applicants setting the number of individuals who will be included in the proposal. We recognize that this will vary from community to community, and organization to organization.*

5. **Community Accountability.** How will your organization be accountable to the selected community you are serving? In your response, please describe:

- How you will ensure that your cultural broker activities will be informed by the selected community.
- The steps have you taken/will you take to learn about the needs and strengths of the selected community.
- How you will know if you are meeting the needs of the people and community you are serving through this grant.

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