



## REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

To produce a blueprint for advancing maternal health equity for people of color in Connecticut. The blueprint will be informed by research conducted by the consultant and by an advisory body that the consultant will establish and facilitate.

**DUE: JANUARY 16, 2024, 5 P.M. (EST)**

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**SUMMARY:** The Connecticut Health Foundation (CT Health) seeks responses to this request for proposals from an experienced consultant or consulting team to produce a blueprint for advancing maternal health equity in Connecticut, based on research and input from an advisory body made up of people working in the field and those with lived experience. The blueprint will provide a statewide vision for advancing maternal health equity and can be used by a range of state stakeholders already working in maternal health or hoping to contribute their unique skills to the work.

The consultant's role will include standing up and managing an advisory body that will inform and guide the development of the blueprint. The consultant will also be responsible for research to inform the blueprint, working with the advisory body to achieve agreement on the best steps forward for Connecticut, and serving as the primary party responsible for writing the blueprint.

Responses must be received by January 16, 2024. Responses received after this deadline will not be eligible for consideration. Incomplete responses will also be ineligible for consideration.

Questions concerning the request for proposals should be directed to Ellen Carter at [ellen@cthealth.org](mailto:ellen@cthealth.org).

**CLOSING DATE AND TIME:**

**January 16, 2024, 5 P.M. (EST)**

**CONTACT PERSON:**

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## REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

### Overview of the Connecticut Health Foundation

The [Connecticut Health Foundation](#) (CT Health) is the state's largest health philanthropy dedicated to eliminating racial and ethnic health disparities in Connecticut. Since we were founded in 1999, the foundation has supported innovative grantmaking, health policy research, leadership development, and technical assistance to achieve our mission. After working on racial equity issues as a part of overall health equity since our inception, CT Health shifted to explicitly focusing on health equity for people of color in 2014.

### Determining what it takes to achieve health equity for people of color

Racial and ethnic minorities in Connecticut are disproportionately affected by illness, disease, and lower life expectancy. People of color experience higher rates of chronic disease and are more likely to be uninsured and unable to access care compared to their white counterparts. Even when health insurance coverage and access to care are not issues, people of color often receive lower quality health care than the white population. For these reasons and many others, CT Health focuses on health equity for people of color in Connecticut.

We recently completed our [strategic plan for 2024 – 2028](#). One of the strategy goal areas in this plan is maternal health equity for people of color. Our long-term vision is that all pregnant people of color have the opportunity for a healthy pregnancy, birth, and start to parenthood, with the elimination of associated preventable mortality and severe morbidity. While maternal health is a new strategic area for CT Health, we know there is significant momentum both in the state and nationally to address the severe disparities that exist.

We believe the foundation can play a role in convening key stakeholders and working collaboratively to develop a unified, statewide blueprint for maternal health equity. The blueprint can serve as a cohesive framework for existing and new efforts and support collaboration across the state. We intend to convene an advisory body to help inform blueprint development. The following scope of work outlines the role of a consultant to convene this advisory body and develop the blueprint.

### Scope of service

We envision two major components to this work:

- 1) Recruiting, convening, and supporting an advisory body of people working on maternal health equity. This advisory body should include people with lived experience, health systems, community-based organizations, foundations, and state agencies.
- 2) Developing a blueprint for maternal health equity in Connecticut, in partnership with the advisory body. This will include:
  - a. Conducting research to identify potential best practices, approaches, and next steps for Connecticut.
  - b. Working with the advisory body to identify what is currently happening on maternal health equity in Connecticut and what gaps and opportunities exist.
  - c. Working with the advisory body to reach agreement on what to recommend in the blueprint.
  - d. Producing the final version of the blueprint.

The blueprint for advancing maternal health equity is intended to be a useful tool for a range of state stakeholders. It will map the efforts already taking place, articulate the changes those in the field want to see and the actions needed to get there, and identify how the foundation and other state stakeholders can contribute unique skills to the work, with the desired outcome of maternal health equity for Connecticut. The blueprint is intended to be implemented by a range of actors in Connecticut, not just the foundation.

### *Convening an advisory body*

The first part of the work will be to establish the advisory body, in partnership with CT Health staff. This includes:

- Defining the advisory body's purpose, scope, and role in decision-making about the blueprint, and articulate this in a role description for advisory body members, in partnership with CT Health.
- Identifying potential advisory body members, in partnership with CT Health.
- Leading the outreach process to recruit advisory body members, in partnership with CT Health.
- Managing the logistics of convening the advisory body and advising CT Health on what supports are required to make the advisory body fully accessible and inclusive (e.g., compensation, childcare, in-person vs. virtual, frequency of meetings).
- Facilitating advisory body meetings in such a way that the group builds trust, every member can fully participate, and all voices are heard. Using facilitation techniques to mitigate power dynamics within the group and supporting the development of relationships and buy-in among the group, such that participants see a role for themselves in implementing the blueprint and are positioned to continue working together to bring it to life.

Our initial thinking is that the advisory body will meet monthly for roughly one year to develop and complete the blueprint. We are open to recommendations from the consultant and advisory body on how the foundation can support implementation efforts once the blueprint is completed.

### *Developing the blueprint*

- In partnership with the advisory body and CT Health, define the purpose and scope of the blueprint, and the information and research required to make decisions.
- With guidance from the advisory body, conduct additional research needed to inform the development of the blueprint. This could include secondary research, interviews, focus groups, etc. The consultant and advisory body will have access to research done as part of CT Health's recent strategic planning process, including a high-level view of the funding landscape in Connecticut, data on maternal health gaps and needs, and potential strategies to advance maternal health. However, additional, deeper research will be needed to identify which groups are working on the ground in maternal health, what gaps exist, and the strategies most likely to move maternal health equity forward in Connecticut.
- Based on the research and advisory body input, produce a draft blueprint. As needed, seek out input from key stakeholders who are not part of the advisory body.
- Facilitate the advisory body through a process of reviewing, refining, and aligning on a final version of the blueprint.
- Finalize the blueprint into a document that can be published and used by partners in the maternal health space.
- Throughout the blueprint process, collaborate with the CT Health staff to provide periodic updates to CT Health's board on progress.

- In collaboration with CT Health and the advisory body, develop a plan for sharing the blueprint with key stakeholders.

### Deliverables

- Materials needed for recruiting and facilitating the advisory body (e.g., a role description, meeting agendas, etc.).
- State-level blueprint for advancing maternal health equity that maps efforts already taking place, changes those in the field want to see, actions needed to get there, how different stakeholders can contribute to the work, and potential areas for collaboration.
- Plan for sharing the blueprint with key stakeholders upon completion.

A final determination of deliverables will be discussed during the review and selection process.

### Approximate timeline for selection and engagement

Date	Event
December 11 – 18, 2023 January 3 – 12, 2024	Informational sessions with CT Health staff ( <a href="#">by appointment</a> )
January 16, 2024	RFP submission process closes at 5:00 pm EST
January 26, 2024	Notification of interview
February 5, 2024	Notification of invitation for a presentation
February 26, 2024	Final decision and notification of contract award
March 1, 2024	Project launch
October 25, 2024	Update to board on progress (in-person retreat)
February 2025	Blueprint completed

### Consultant qualifications and expectations

CT Health seeks a consultant(s) that will work collaboratively with our staff and leadership. The foundation seeks to engage a consultant with the following qualifications:

#### *Experience facilitating advisory bodies and building relationships*

- Strong facilitation skills that center the voices of those with lived experience and deftly manage power dynamics both within advisory body participants and with the foundation, so that all participants feel included and fully able to share their perspectives.
- Experience standing up and managing advisory bodies, including:
  - Designing the structure of the advisory body
  - Advising on the cadence of meetings, and how decisions are made
  - Building trusting, collaborative relationships among advisory body members
- Preference for consultant or consulting team members with strong cultural competency and who share racial identities and/or lived experiences with those most impacted by maternal health disparities in Connecticut

### *Understanding of maternal health issues*

- Strong experience in and understanding of maternal health equity for people of color, including data on the issues and emerging approaches and strategies in the field
- Demonstrated commitment to advancing racial equity
- Preference for experience in Connecticut and knowledge of the Connecticut policy and nonprofit landscape related to maternal health

### *Research and communication skills*

- Strong research and analysis skills, with experience in maternal health, health equity, health policy, and systems change
- Ability to synthesize complex information for a variety of audiences to facilitate shared learning and decision making
- Ability to communicate findings in plain language
- Superior project management ability
- Commitment to open, candid, and frequent communication with foundation staff

### **Reporting structure**

The consulting team will report directly to Ellen Carter, CT Health's vice president of program.

### **RFP submission preparation and formatting guidelines**

To be considered for this project, respondents must answer the questions outlined in RFP Requirements. Responses should not exceed 10 pages. Also required is the submission of a curriculum vitae (for each team member) and three references (names and contact information).

### **RFP requirements**

CT Health will select a consultant or consultant team based on demonstrated experience, skills, and capacity to facilitate groups with diverse identities and experiences, lead research, and synthesize multiple different points of view, as well as ability to be a trusted partner in working with both the foundation and its grantees/partners.

Applicants should submit responses and appropriate supporting documentation for each of the criteria/questions listed below. Please limit your responses to no more than 10 pages (excluding attachments). The foundation values the ability to convey information in a clear and succinct way. Deliverables should be accessible to a broad audience and free from jargon.

- 1) State the applicant organization's name and contact information.
- 2) Identify the organization's status with the Internal Revenue Services.
- 3) If applicable, identify the applicant's affiliations with institutions of higher education.
- 4) What is your experience working in maternal health and on health equity issues?
- 5) What type of work does the consultant/team members generally perform?
- 6) What is your organizational structure? Describe your ability to provide necessary supervision, direction, administrative support, and technical capacity to complete the project.
- 7) Identify the lead consultant and team members (if applicable) and provide a summary of their relevant experience and skills. Attach a CV for each team member.

- 8) Provide an overview of the approach the consultant/team might employ to complete the scope of services in the timeline outlined.
- 9) Provide examples of experience consulting on projects of similar scale and scope including managing and standing up advisory bodies and developing blueprints. Please provide specific examples of the consulting team members experience with facilitation and research.
- 10) Demonstrate the consulting team's understanding of racial justice and power dynamics in the health sector / social sector. Provide examples of previous work in these areas.
- 11) Describe the team's philosophy, skills, and strategies for engaging people from diverse cultures and communities, citing specific past examples.
- 12) Submit a draft budget and budget narrative. The budget should not exceed \$150,000.

### Submission, review, and selection process

The foundation welcomes interested parties to contact staff with questions before submitting a proposal. [Click here to set up a meeting with the CT Health team to discuss this opportunity.](#)

Proposals from applicants are due **January 16, 2024**. Please e-mail proposals to Ellen Carter at [ellen@cthealth.org](mailto:ellen@cthealth.org). The foundation will conduct a two-stage review process. Some applicants will be selected to participate in an interview with the CT Health Team; interviews will take place the week of January 29 – February 2, 2024.

After the interview process, the foundation will invite a select group of finalists to lead reviewers through a mock advisory body meeting. These presentations will take place the week of February 12 – 16, 2024.

All consultants who submit responses to this request for proposals will receive notification of the result of the selection process by February 26, 2024.