



Department of Behavioral Health

Grants Posting Request for Application (RFA) Template

Office of [Treatment Services](#) Request for Applications

[High-THC Cannabis Impact Research Study](#)

RFA #[90](#), MHA-FY26 Bureau of Behavioral Health Treatment

Funding Period: [\(12-15-2025\)](#) – [\(06-30-2027\)](#)

Request for Applications Posting Date: [\(10-10-2025\)](#)

Request for Applications Due Date: [\(11-21-2025\)](#), by 3 p.m. EDT

Grants Posting Evaluation Criteria for Request for Applications (RFA)

High-THC Cannabis Impact Research Study Office of Treatment Services Bureau of Behavioral Health Treatment

RFA #: [90](#)

Applications should be completed using the following information, guidance, and requirements:

SECTION I. GENERAL PURPOSE & APPLICANT INFORMATION

1.1 Purpose

The Ohio Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) releases this Request for Applications (RFA) for the purpose of soliciting applications from a [qualified public university, public safety agency, or research consortium](#) to provide [investigational and research services to satisfy Ohio legislative requirements of Am. Sub. House Bill 96 \(§751.90\)](#). This RFA seeks to select [one](#) grantee. The responsibilities of the selected applicants will include [fulfilling the legislative request for a High-THC Cannabis Impact Research Study over two state fiscal years. The awardee will assess the potential health risks and benefits of cannabis and hemp-derived product use and review state-level program evaluations from other states and peer-reviewed research.](#)

For the purpose of this RFA, the term “applicant” is defined as a nonprofit organization, governmental entity, or individual interested in this opportunity. The terms “application” and “response” may be used interchangeably to indicate materials submitted to DBH by an applicant in order to be considered for award of a grant for services described in this RFA. The terms “grantee” and “selected applicant” may be used interchangeably in reference to an organization selected by DBH through this RFA for award.

1.2 Overview of the Project

[This project seeks to satisfy the requirements of Am. Sub. House Bill 96 \(§751.90\). The goals of the project are to assess the potential health risks and benefits of cannabis and hemp-derived product use and to review state-level program evaluations from other states and peer-reviewed research.](#)

[The awardee is expected to provide the Department of Behavioral Health two reports, an initial report submitted by June 1st, 2026, and a final report submitted June 1st, 2027.](#)

1.3 Issuing Office

The DBH Bureau of Behavioral Health Treatment, Office of Treatment Services is issuing this RFA and overseeing the resulting grant.

1.4 Background

On November 7, 2023, a majority of Ohio voters approved Issue 2 to legalize the possession and use of cannabis by individuals aged 21 and over, the sale of cannabis by state-licensed dispensaries, thus creating the Division of Cannabis Control (DCC or Division) within the Ohio Department of Commerce.

Then in 2025, the 136th general assembly passed Am. Sub. House Bill 96, which became effective on June 30th, 2025. Section 751.90 authorizes the Department of Behavioral Health in collaboration with the Department of Commerce to conduct a study in partnership with a qualified entity to assess the potential health risks and benefits of cannabis and hemp-derived product use and review state-level program evaluations from other states and peer-reviewed research.

1.5 Scope of Work

The scope of work shall include all effort to satisfy the requirements of Am. Sub. House Bill 96 (§751.90). The awardee should assess the potential health risks and benefits of cannabis and hemp-derived product use and review state-level program evaluations from other states and peer-reviewed research regarding the following:

- (1) Physical, behavioral, cognitive, and neurodevelopmental effects of chronic or early use of high-potency THC cannabis products, particularly among individuals under the age of twenty-five;
- (2) Cannabis-induced psychosis and schizophrenia;
- (3) Cannabis hyperemesis syndrome;
- (4) The relationship between cannabis use and depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation, completed suicides, and cannabis use disorder;
- (5) The relationship between cannabis use and cognitive and neurodevelopmental impairments such as decline in memory and executive functioning;
- (6) Disproportionate impacts of cannabis use on vulnerable populations, including youth, pregnant women, unborn children, and individuals with a history of trauma or mental illness;
- (7) The relationship between cannabis use and IQ loss;
- (8) Health benefits of cannabis and hemp-derived products, including potential therapeutic uses and recommended guidelines for potency and usage.

At least two products are required from this research study, including an initial progress report due June 1, 2026 and final report due June 1, 2027. These reports should include at least the following:

- (1) A comparative analysis of THC regulations, potency limits, and health outcomes from other

- states' cannabis programs;
- (2) A synthesis of peer-reviewed research and reputable state program data; and
- (3) Recommendations for cannabis regulation, prevention education, public education campaigns, and outreach efforts for stakeholders such as the General Assembly, state agencies, employers, educators, and the general public.

1.6 Eligible Applicants

DBH seeks applications from organizations that [are a qualified Ohio public university, public safety agency, or research consortium](#).

Only organizations that have the resources to complete each item under “Scope of Work/Deliverables” should apply. Applicants must be a 501-C (3) or (4) non-profit or government entity.

1.7 Award

The DBH has released this RFA with the intent of awarding up to [\\$300,000](#) per year [for two years](#) to [one qualified Ohio public university, public safety agency, or research consortium](#), which will in turn support [investigational and research services to satisfy Ohio legislative requirements of Am. Sub. House Bill 96 \(§751.90\)](#). Applicants must be a 501-C (3) or (4) entity.

Awards are expected to be announced for project implementation the week of [12-8-2025](#). Future funding award years are contingent upon successful performance.

The actual dollar amounts awarded for selected applications will be based on the amount of state funding made available to DBH, and the number of applications which are both qualified and selected for award. Applications are qualified if they are in accordance with the application submission requirements and earn at least the minimum score requirements for quality and completeness of applications, as specified in this RFA. Scoring and final selections will be completed by a team selected by DBH. To make its final selection of applications which will receive awards and to determine the size of those awards, DBH may, at its option, take into consideration application quality, reasonableness and appropriateness of the proposed budget, geographic diversity, local collaborations and funding available.

DBH may, at its option, make selections based in part on geographical and demographic criteria in order to provide a wide range of services around the state, and in both urban and rural areas. Applicants are encouraged to prepare and submit applications and budgets which are both practicable and capable of [investigational and research services to satisfy Ohio legislative requirements of Am. Sub. House Bill 96 \(§751.90\)](#).

Applicants are to be aware that DBH may, at its sole discretion, negotiate with all technically qualifying applicants for a revised Project Budget, if the Project Budgets of all technically qualifying applicants

are in excess of the available funding for this project. Please refer to Section 7.1 C. of this RFA for further information on DBH procedures to be implemented if this occurs.

SECTION II. Posting and Award PROCESS INFORMATION

2.1 Anticipated Timetable

1. The RFA, accompanying documents, and all questions and answers will be posted on the DBH website at: <https://dbh.ohio.gov/supporting-providers/apply-for-funding/funding-opportunities>
2. All questions must be submitted electronically no later than **11-14-2025, by 3 p.m. EDT**, to DBH at: treatmentgrants@dbh.ohio.gov
3. The FAQ mailbox will close one week prior to the application due date. No questions will be answered after the deadline. You may **NOT** contact any DBH staff member directly with questions regarding this RFA. Contacting staff directly with questions could result in disqualification of an application.
4. Responses to all questions (FAQ) will be posted to the DBH website at <https://dbh.ohio.gov/supporting-providers/apply-for-funding/funding-opportunities> and will be updated frequently if applicable.
5. Applications must be submitted electronically to treatmentgrants@dbh.ohio.gov by **11-21-2025 by 3 p.m. EDT**.
6. Application grant notification letters will be sent approximately fourteen days post grant application closure.
7. DBH agreements are not valid and effective until the issuance of an approved State of Ohio Notice of Sub-Award (NOSA). The NOSA will contain the start and end dates of the award.

8. The grantee(s) must be able to begin work no later than seven (7) working days after the time funds are encumbered and approved by the Office of Budget & Management. The grantee(s) will be notified by the DBH Agreement Manager when work may begin. Any work begun by the grantee prior to this notification may not be reimbursable by DBH.
9. All work must be completed and approved by the DBH Identified Agreement Manager. All work must be completed by 3:00 p.m. of the last day of the programmatic period as it appears on the NOSA.

It is the responsibility of all applicants to check the webpage dedicated to this RFA on a regular basis for responses to all questions, as well as for any amendments, alerts, or other pertinent information regarding this RFA. DBH is not responsible for the accuracy of any information regarding this RFA that was obtained or gathered through a source different from the Q & A process described in this RFA.

Should applicants experience technical difficulties accessing the DBH website where the RFA and its related documents are published, they may contact the DBH Helpdesk at (Helpdesk@dbh.ohio.gov) for guidance.

SECTION III. APPLICATION GUIDELINES

The applicant must submit electronic response to treatmentgrants@dbh.ohio.gov. A copy of the grant *application* must be received by DBH no later than **11-21-2025 by 3 PM EST**. *Applications* received after this date and time will not be reviewed. Materials mailed or submitted separately from the *application* packet will not be accepted or added to the application/proposal by staff of DBH. Faxed or mailed *applications* will not be accepted. Costs incurred in the preparation of this application are to be borne by the applicant; DBH will not contribute in any way to the costs of the preparation.

3.1 Page Limit

The page limit for this application is **10** pages, single spaced, one-inch margins, 12-point Times New Roman. The **10** pages do not include the Budget Expenditure Form and Budget Narrative.

Please note that if the application is longer than **10** pages, DBH will evaluate the application based upon the first **10** pages, and the remainder of the application may be disregarded.

3.2 Application Components

A. Face-sheet

- a. Name of applicant organization, address, phone number
- b. Executive director name and contact information
- c. Project Director name and contact information
- d. Fiscal officer name and contact information
- e. Applicant's federal tax ID
- f. Specify whether applicant is a 501 C (3) or (4) non-profit or government entity
- g. Title of this RFA
- h. Amount of funding requested

B. Abstract – Summary of services and supports to be provided, the target population(s), number of individuals projected to be served in the first and second funding period, the goal(s) and object(s) of the proposed services and supports, and the total amount of funding requested for the first and second funding period. (400 words or less)

C. Scope of the Work/Project Description: Provide a detailed description of the proposed approach to completing each deliverable and timeline for completing each deliverable. In the project description, please also include the following information.

- a. **Applicant Qualifications:** The applicant must address all the minimum qualifications and fully describe the applicant's experience and qualifications.
- b. **Staffing Plan:** The applicant's response must identify by position and name, the staff who will be key to the project's success. Include qualifications, the amount of FTE per position, and the service providers' level of subject matter expertise implementing the proposed services and supports.
- c. **Sub-Awardee** qualifications and staffing plan (if applicable)

D. Prior Experience

Applications must demonstrate prior experience successfully implementing complex subject projects subject projects related to the subject matter.

E. Proposed Implementation Approach

Applications must provide a realistic timeline for each month of the project. The timeline should include objectives that are SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and

time-bound). All key dates, key activities, and responsible personnel should be outlined in detail and align with the proposed phases of the project.

F. Outcome Measures

Applications must include a description of the project goals and outcomes to be achieved; a detailed methodology for measuring progress; benchmarks that provide an indication of standards to be achieved; a methodology for tracking progress achievements or shortfalls; and a methodology for analyzing and correcting project errors.

G. Budget Expenditure Form and Budget Narrative

- a. Applications must include a Budget Expenditure Form and Budget Narrative that identifies all costs to complete the project as described in the Request for Application.
- b. Include a signed Notice of Award/Sub-awardee Statement of Assurances including budget and budget narrative for each sub-awardee.
- c. Include the Budget Checklist which can be found on the DBH Funding Opportunity Page.

By submitting a budget expenditure form and budget narrative, the Applicant is confirming that the services and deliverables outlined within this RFA are encompassed within the budget expenditure form and budget narrative. The Applicant acknowledges that if their application is chosen as a result of this RFA, the Applicant will not be entitled to increase the original application's cost breakdown. DBH relies on the budget expenditure form and budget narrative to adequately evaluate and determine awards, and no Applicant shall be entitled to additional funds outside of the cost proposal.

SECTION IV. CRITERIA FOR APPLICATION SCORING

4.1 Scoring Applications

DBH will enter into agreement(s) with a grantee(s) that best demonstrates the ability to meet requirements as specified in the RFA. Applicants submitting a response will be evaluated based on the capacity and experience demonstrated in their Application and Project Budget. All applications will be reviewed and scored by a team from DBH.

DBH is under no obligation to issue an agreement as a result of this solicitation if, in the opinion of DBH and the Scoring Team, none of the applications are responsive to the objectives and needs of

DBH. DBH reserves the right not to select any application should DBH decide not to proceed.

DBH may review the highest-ranking Applicants and/or its key team members to ensure that the Applicant is responsible. The award may not be made to an Applicant that is determined not to be responsible. DBH's determination of an Applicant's responsibility may include the following factors: the experience of the Applicant and its key team members; past conduct and past performance on previous contracts or grants; ability to execute this project properly; and management skill. DBH will make such determination of responsibility based on the Applicant's Application, reference evaluations, and any other information DBH requests or determines to be relevant.

Additionally, DBH reserves the right to review the Applicant's previous work or work product prior to awarding a grant.

All applications and any other documents submitted to DBH in response to any solicitation shall become the property of DBH. This RFA and, after the selection of an applicant for award, any applications received in response to a solicitation that have been opened, reviewed and considered by DBH are deemed to be public records pursuant to ORC 149.43. For purposes of this section, the term "application" shall mean both the Technical Application and the Project Budget submitted by an applicant and any attachments, addenda, appendices, resumes, letters of recommendation, or sample products.

A. Criteria for Scoring

All applications will be scored based on the available points per section according to the following scale, based on a proposed plan's ability to meet the objectives outlined in this RFA. The application scoring uses the following point values for rating each requirement:

Technical Performance Scoring Definitions:

- **DOES NOT MEET (0):** Response does not comply substantially with requirements or is not provided.
- **WEAK (1):** Response was poor related to meeting the objectives.
- **BELOW AVERAGE (2):** Response indicates the objectives will not be completely met or at a level that will be below average.
- **MEETS (3):** Response generally meets the objectives (or expectations).
- **ABOVE AVERAGE (4):** Response indicates the objectives will be exceeded.
- **STRONG (5):** Response significantly exceeds objectives (or expectations) in ways that provide tangible benefits or meets objectives (or expectations) and contains at least one enhancing feature that provides significant benefits.

Award

1. Awards are expected to be announced during the week of [12-8-2025](#)
2. Grant award will not exceed [\\$300,000](#) per grant recipient each year of the grant.

3. All grant funds must be expended by 06-30-2027.
4. Renewals are subject to successful performance and the availability of future funds.

**Deadline for submission of all applications is 11-21-2025, 3 p.m. EDT
and must be submitted to treatmentgrants@dbh.ohio.gov**

SECTION V. CONDITIONS AND OTHER REQUIREMENTS

*According to requirements of Ohio Revised Code (ORC) 126.07, DBH agreements are not valid and enforceable until the Office of Budget and Management (OBM) certifies the availability of appropriate funding, as indicated by the approval of the Purchase Order (PO). The selected applicant(s) may neither perform work nor submit an invoice for payment for work performed for this project for any time period prior to the PO approval date. The DBH Agreement Manager will notify the selected applicant(s) when the requirements of ORC Section 126.07 have been met.

* * Subject to all applicable approvals, the agreement period is expected to run from approximately [12-15-2025](#) through [06-30-2027](#). Renewal of the agreement(s) will be contingent upon availability of funding, satisfactory performance, the continued need for the services described herein, and all required approvals.

5.1 Public Release of Records

Public release of any evaluation or monitoring reports funded under this agreement will be made only by DBH. Prior to public release of such reports, DBH must have at least a thirty (30) day period for review and comment.

SECTION VI. ATTACHMENTS AND THEIR USES

- A. Required Applicant Information and Certifications (*To be completed & included in the application as specified*)**
- B. Assurances**
- C. Application Score Sheet (*For applicant reference purposes*)**
- D. Project Budget Form (*To be completed and included in cost application packet as specified in Section 3.2, B.*)**

RFA Scoring Evaluation Instructions

EVALUATION CRITERIA:

EVALUATION TEAM: The evaluation team shall be comprised of three to five individuals, with three being the absolute minimum, who are required to individually review and score each application. The team members should have some knowledge of the RFA's subject matter; however, every member does not need to be knowledgeable in every aspect of the RFA. After each individual separately reviews and scores each application, a consensus meeting will take place to discuss all applications and determine a consensus score on a separate scoring sheet for each application. All finalized scoring sheets must be submitted to the Agency Procurement Officer for review and verification, prior to an award being made.

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS, EVALUATION, RATING, AND SCORING: Each application will be scored, and numerical technical point values will be assigned according to the criteria listed below. The scale (0-5) will be used to rate each application response to the RFA on the technical evaluation sections:

DOES NOT MEET	WEAK	BELOW AVERAGE	MEETS	ABOVE AVERAGE	STRONG
0 POINTS	1 POINT	2 POINTS	3 POINTS	4 POINTS	5 POINTS

DBH will score the application responses by adding all categories together for the Offeror's total technical score.

Representative numerical values are defined as follows:

- DOES NOT MEET (0): Response does not comply substantially with requirements or is not provided.
- WEAK (1): Response was poor related to meeting the objectives.
- BELOW AVERAGE (2): Response indicates the objectives will not be completely met or at a level that will be below average.
- MEETS (3): Response generally meets the objectives (or expectations).
- ABOVE AVERAGE (4): Response indicates the objectives will be exceeded.
- STRONG (5): Response significantly exceeds objectives (or expectations) in ways that provide tangible benefits or meets objectives (or expectations) and contains at least one enhancing feature that provides significant benefits.

Once each of the Evaluation Criteria's ratings are completed, to calculate the total score, sum all category ratings.

Evaluation Criteria	Rating (0-5)	Score
Example 1	3	3
Example 2	5	5

Total Score: 8

Scoring Rubric

1. Application Score Sheet (For applicant reference purposes). Note that this form may be modified to meet the needs of the project. The Scoring Rubric must be submitted with the RFA to the Legal Office for review.

Note: Please note that the Bureau of Grants Administration is no longer utilizing weighting. As such, scores from each category will be summed and will not be multiplied by a weighting factor.

DOES NOT MEET	WEAK	BELOW AVERAGE	MEETS	ABOVE AVERAGE	STRONG
0 POINTS	1 POINT	2 POINTS	3 POINTS	4 POINTS	5 POINTS

Organization: _____

Name: _____

Review Criterion	Rating 0-5	Score
Face Sheet		
Abstract: Summary of the proposed plan		
Scope of Work/Project Description: Provide a detailed description of the proposed approach to completing each deliverable and timeline for completing each deliverable. In the project description, please also include the following information.		
Applicant Qualifications: Demonstration that applicant meets the minimum qualifications to apply for the grant. Applications that do not meet the minimum qualifications will not be scored.		
Prior experience: Demonstration that applicant has prior experience successfully implementing complex projects across multiple organizations, including prior experience developing training curricula, hosting trainings, and leading organizations to improve performance as applicable.		

Staffing Plan: Plan for recruiting staff, including a list of staff positions, assigned duties, proposed qualifications, and the amount of FTE for each position on the project. Include sub awardees if relevant.		
Proposed implementation approach: A realistic timeline for each month of the project. The timeline should include objectives that are SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound). All key dates, key activities, and responsible personnel should be outlined in detail and align with the proposed phases of the project.		
Cost: Cost is reasonable, realistic, and is within the projected annual budget		
Total Score		

Comments:

Printed Name of Reviewer _____

Signature of Reviewer _____

Date _____