

# Request for Proposals (RFP) Statewide Equity thru Data, Justice, Inclusion & Education (EDJIE) Initiative

Equity Audit of Restorative Programs

ISSUE DATE: February 8, 2023

QUESTIONS DUE BY: February 22, 2023

RFP LIVE ONLINE INFORMATION SESSION: 10:00 am EST, February 23, 2023--  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87022456269>

RFP RESPONSES DUE BY: March 13, 2023

PLEASE BE ADVISED THAT ALL NOTIFICATIONS, RELEASES, AND AMENDMENTS ASSOCIATED WITH THIS RFP WILL BE POSTED AT: <https://ocrjvt.org/rfp>

THE OCRJC WILL NOT CONTACT INTERESTED PARTIES WITH UPDATED INFORMATION. IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF EACH BIDDER TO PERIODICALLY CHECK THE ABOVE WEB PAGE FOR ANY AND ALL NOTIFICATIONS, RELEASES AND AMENDMENTS ASSOCIATED WITH THIS RFP.

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**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**  
**Orange County Restorative Justice Center**  
**Statewide Equity thru Data, Justice, Inclusion & Education (EDJIE) Initiative**  
**Equity Audit of Restorative Programs Project**

**Section 1: OVERVIEW**

Through this Request for Proposal (RFP) the Orange County Restorative Justice Center (hereinafter, OCRJC) is seeking proposals from qualified and experienced entities to provide equity audit services. The purpose of this work is to guide the 23 agencies implementing restorative programs on how to improve statewide practices and procedures developed with the four primary funders (VT Department of Corrections-DOC, the VT Attorney General’s Office-AGO-DCF, the VT Department for Children and Families, and the Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services-VCCVS) to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion of historically underrepresented populations in their staff, volunteers and leadership, and decrease inequities and harm to marginalized populations involved in restorative programs in accordance with the Scope of Work specified in this RFP. An award will be made to the entity that demonstrates:

- expertise in the review of practices, procedures and protocols for adherence to best practices for positive diversity, equity and inclusion outcomes;
- experience training organizational leadership in best practices for inclusive and equity in recruitment;
- experience with human service organizations and/or in the justice field;

and, in addition,

- proposes reasonable costs,
- and meets the requirements of this RFP.

It is the intent to award a contract for a 1-year term, with options for additional extensions. OCRJC will hold the master contract supported by Grant No. 15PBJA-22-GG-01205-BRND awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the Office for Victims of Crime, and the SMART Office.

We recognize our work is strengthened when our colleagues include people of diverse races, ethnicities, backgrounds and identities, recognizing and respecting that all perspectives and experiences are valuable to our work and essential to our public service. For the purposes of this project, we encourage proposals led by BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) and other historically underrepresented populations. This includes, but is not limited to, communities who identify as immigrants, women, older adults, LGBTQIA+, disabled, members of racial and ethnic minorities, and firms, organizations, and vendors with a shared commitment to advancing equity.

**A. BACKGROUND:**

Vermont’s 23 community and restorative justice organizations (hereafter referred to as “restorative justice agencies”) engage Vermont’s citizens in addressing conflict and crime in their communities, offering opportunities for people impacted by crime to have their needs met in ways the legal system is ill equipped to provide. These organizations include community justice centers and other non-profit agencies, some of

which have funding sources in addition to the three named above. See Appendix I for services funded by the AGO, DCF, and DOC.

Evidence-based restorative practices are known to reduce entry into the criminal and juvenile justice systems and to reduce recidivism. Restorative justice programs provide cost savings to communities by reducing the number of cases entering the criminal justice system; reducing workloads for police, courts, the State's Attorney's office, and Department of Corrections; and taking a holistic, repair-oriented approach to justice. Restorative justice systems and programs must ensure that these transformative efforts are equitable and fair for all Vermonters.

See Appendix I for a detailed description of Vermont's state funded restorative justice programs and the agencies, organizations and municipalities contracted to carry out this work.

## **B. MISSION OF INITIATIVE:**

There are numerous examples of areas where Vermont's criminal justice and law enforcement systems are systematically failing people in the most marginalized identity groups. Training, education, and consistent, effective data collection tools and practices are necessary to understand and take action to address the ways Vermont's restorative justice system perpetuates the prevalent inequities in the criminal legal systems. This 2-year grant allows the 23 state-funded restorative justice (RJ) organizations to pursue the following project outcomes:

1. Develop, deliver, and institutionalize professional development trainings to address personal and institutional racism, implicit bias, trauma, gender equity, and general inclusivity;
2. Conduct a statewide data collection evaluation to improve racial justice and inclusion outcomes, including a needs assessment, the creation of standard metrics and collection tools, and the proposal for a new, shared data-management system;
3. Support agencies and state partners to review and update policies and procedures with the guidance of anti-racism experts.

A six-member leadership team, comprised of directors from six of the 23 agencies, is coordinating this initiative. The OCRJC serves as the fiscal agent for the project and will be the organization on record for contracting with up to three entities to manage this work.

Up to \$287,000 is available to fund 3 contracts that fulfill the project outcomes listed above.

## **C. SCOPE:**

The scope of the Equity Audit consultancy will include working with the Initiative Leadership Team to conduct an equity audit of practices, procedures and protocols developed with the four primary funders (VT Department of Corrections-DOC, the VT Attorney General's Office-AGO-DCF, the VT Department for Children and Families, and the Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services-VCCVS) to guide the 23 agencies implementing state funded restorative programs. This review will generate recommendations on how to improve existing practices, internal policies, and procedures to reduce bias, inequities, and harm to marginalized populations involved in restorative programs, as well as consideration for new procedures, internal policies, and practices to meet these aims. In addition, the consultant will provide regional trainings with local restorative justice agency leaders to improve internal organizational policies and procedures to increase diversity, equity and inclusion of historically underrepresented populations in agencies' staff, volunteers and leadership.

**D. DELIVERABLES:**

At the conclusion of this project, internal program practices, policy and procedure recommendations will be available to the State and restorative justice agencies to work toward building anti-racist and inclusive organizations. It is anticipated that at least 15 of the 23 restorative justice agencies will participate in organizational development equity training during the project period.

Specifically:

1. Conduct an Equity Audit of Grant Agreements, Program Manuals, Work Rules, Applications, Intake and referral paperwork and other relevant documents that shape the implementation of restorative programs by the four State funders;
2. Engage project partners, stakeholders and community members in an assessment to understand current culture, practices, behaviors, and actions within the restorative justice community related to equity, diversity, and inclusion;
3. Facilitate a meeting to review recommendations with relevant stakeholders.
4. Provide 3 regional trainings for directors and relevant organization leaders on best practices for hiring, volunteer and board recruitment, and organizational practices that increase diversity, equity and inclusion of historically underrepresented populations within the organization.

It is anticipated that work would start by May 1, 2023 and be completed by June 30, 2024.

To the extent possible, and as needed and required by the scope and intended outcomes, the entities offering this service are expected to work in coordination with other entities contracted to fulfill the grant outcomes.

**E. SINGLE POINT OF CONTACT:**

All communications concerning this RFP are to be addressed in writing to Jessie Schmidt on the front page of this RFP.

**F. QUESTION AND ANSWER PERIOD:**

Any vendor requiring clarification of any section of this RFP or wishing to comment on any requirement of the RFP must submit specific questions via email using the subject line "OCRJC Statewide Equity thru Data, Justice, Inclusion & Education (EDJIE) Initiative" no later than the deadline for questions indicated on the first page of this RFP. Questions should be e-mailed to the point of contact on the front page of this RFP. Questions or comments not raised in writing on or before the last day of the question period are thereafter waived.

**Section 2: GENERAL REQUIREMENTS**

**A. VENDOR REQUIREMENTS:** Vendors must be registered in the Federal System for Award Management (SAM.gov) and be in good standing, neither debarred or suspended.

**B. CONTRACT TERMS:** The selected bidders will be expected to sign a contract with the OCRJC, including the Standard Federal Assurances as required by the Department of Justice and “Equal Employment Opportunity” as described by the Civil Rights Act. See Attachment II as linked in this RFP for reference.

**C. SUBCONTRACTORS:** If a Bidder intends to use subcontractors, the Bidder must identify in the proposal the names of the subcontractors, the portions of the work the subcontractors will perform, ensure the subcontractors can meet the Standard Federal Assurances as required by the Department of Justice, and address the background and experience of the subcontractor(s).

**D. PRICING:** Bidders must price the terms of this solicitation at their best pricing. Any and all costs that a Bidder wishes the OCRJC to consider must be submitted for consideration. Competitive cost proposals are sought.

**E. BEST AND FINAL OFFER (BAFO):** At any time after submission of Responses and prior to the final selection of Bidder(s) for Contract negotiation or execution, the OCRJC may invite Bidder(s) to provide a BAFO.

OCRJC reserves the right to request BAFOs from only those Bidders that meet the minimum qualification requirements and/or have not been eliminated from consideration during the evaluation process.

**F. METHOD OF AWARD:** The OCRJC may award one or more contracts and reserves the right to make additional awards to other compliant bidders at any time if such award is deemed to be in the best interest of the OCRJC.

The OCRJC shall have the authority to evaluate responses and select the Bidder(s) as may be determined to be in the best interest of the OCRJC and consistent with the goals and performance requirements outlined in this RFP.

Consideration shall be given to the Bidder’s proposal as specified here

	Total Possible Points
Qualifications and experience	25
Proposed plan of work	30
References	20
Cost proposal	25

**G. STATEMENT OF RIGHTS:** The OCRJC reserves the right to obtain clarification or additional information necessary to properly evaluate a proposal. Vendors may be asked to give a verbal presentation of their proposal after submission. Failure of vendor to respond to a request for additional information or clarification could result in rejection of that vendor's proposal. The OCRJC reserves the right to accept or reject any and all bids, in whole or in part, with or without cause, and to waive technicalities in submissions.

### **Section 3: CONTENT AND FORMAT OF RESPONSES**

The content and format requirements listed below are the minimum requirements for proposal evaluation. These requirements are not intended to limit the content of a Bidder's proposal. Bidders may include additional information or offer alternative solutions for consideration. However, the OCRJC discourages overly lengthy and costly proposals, and Bidders are advised to include only such information in their response as may be relevant to the requirements of this RFP.

#### **A. COVER LETTER:**

1. Confidentiality: To the extent your bid contains information you consider to be proprietary and confidential, you must comply with the following requirements concerning the contents of your cover letter and the submission of a redacted copy of your bid (or affected portions thereof).

The successful response will become part of the contract file and will become a matter of public record, as will all other responses received. If the response includes material that is considered by the bidder to be proprietary and confidential under the State's Public Records Act, 1 V.S.A. § 315 et seq., the bidder shall submit a cover letter that clearly identifies each page or section of the response that it believes is proprietary and confidential. The bidder shall also provide in their cover letter a written explanation for each marked section explaining why such material should be considered exempt from public disclosure in the event of a public records request, pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 317(c), including the prospective harm to the competitive position of the bidder if the identified material were to be released. Additionally, the bidder must include a redacted copy of its response for portions that are considered proprietary and confidential. Redactions must be limited so that the reviewer may understand the nature of the information being withheld. It is typically inappropriate to redact entire pages, or to redact the titles/captions of tables and figures. Under no circumstances can the entire response be marked confidential, and OCRJC reserves the right to disqualify responses so marked.

2. Exceptions to Contract Terms and Conditions: If the bidder wishes to propose an exception to any terms and conditions set forth in the attachments, such exceptions must be included in the cover letter to the RFP response. Failure to note exceptions when responding to the RFP will be deemed to be acceptance of OCRJC terms and conditions. If exceptions are not noted in the response to this RFP but raised during contract negotiations, OCRJC reserves the right to cancel the negotiation if deemed to be in the best interests of OCRJC. Note that exceptions to terms may cause rejection of the proposal.

#### **B. PROPOSAL:**

Provide a narrative proposal responsive to the RFP and prepared in this format: single-spaced, 11-point font, and one-inch margins. The proposal should not exceed 8 pages and should include a description of the following.

##### 1. The Bidder's Qualifications and Experience

Provide information relative to:

- a) Experience conducting equity audits with public and non-profit entities;
- b) Methods of information gathering and communication to minimize in-person meetings and travel expenses;
- c) Approach to presentation of findings and recommendations; and
- d) Approach to feedback and evaluation of project work.

Additional qualifications:

- e) Relevant experience working with criminal and juvenile justice related organizations and state agencies;
- f) Key personnel's experience in this field of equity and inclusion;
- g) Familiarity with state directed programs;
- h) Experience developing and conducting training for organization leadership.
- i) Staff, managerial, and fiscal resources to complete all elements of the project in accordance with the required timeline; and
- j) Experience, aptitude, and strategies for developing and implementing cost-effective and impactful audits and training and methods to evaluate its efficacy.

## 2. Narrative Project Proposal

Provide a detailed description of how the vendor will achieve the project goals, outcomes and deliverables. Proposals should include an anticipated timeline and support needed to be successful, as well as methods for feedback, review and analysis of project progress with the leadership team throughout the term of the contract. Entities are encouraged to share creative approaches and unique methods for achieving project goals and outcomes.

## 3. Budget Narrative and Detailed Cost Proposal

Provide a cost proposal including hourly rates for key personnel, any anticipated expenses, travel and an explanation of how each line item was calculated. See Appendix III for an example budget template.

## 3. References

- a) Provide examples of previous Equity Audits successfully completed in comparable size and scope;
- b) Provide names and contact information of three references who can speak to the bidder's experience and qualifications to provide this service.

## **Section 4: SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS**

**A. CLOSING DATE:** Bids must be received by the due date specified on the front page of this RFP.

Bids must be submitted electronically via email to: [jessie@ocrjvt.org](mailto:jessie@ocrjvt.org) and in accordance with the following requirements:

- The subject line of the email submission must read "EDJIE EQUITY AUDIT RFP."
- Bids must consist of a single email with a PDF attachment containing all components of the bid. Multiple emails and/or excessive attachments will not be accepted.
- There is an attachment size limit of 25 MB. It is the Bidder's responsibility to compress the PDF file containing its bid, if necessary, in order to meet this size limitation.

## **ATTACHMENTS:**

- I. Statewide Restorative Justice Programs and Agencies
- II. Standard Federal Assurances
- III. Budget Template Example