ACADEMY FOR COMMUNITY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH
CALL FOR COLLABORATORS: ACADEMY GROWTH AND SUSTAINABILITY

The Academy seeks one or more qualified consultants to advise on strategies that will help us strengthen internal capacities, pursue thoughtful growth, deepen impact, and move toward sustainability. We invite responses that address one or more of the three priority areas identified below: **finance**, **infrastructure**, and **programming**.

We expect consultations to begin in Spring 2025. Scopes of work and budgets will be determined based on deliverables. The overall budget for contracts that meet the goals of this call is expected not to exceed $25,000.

The Academy will review applications on a rolling basis through April 30, 2025.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Academy for Community Behavioral Health at the CUNY School of Professional Studies partners with community-based organizations (CBOs) and other non-profit care providers to improve access to compassionate, culturally responsive care. These care providers witness, experience, and address a range of harms in their communities, including the impacts of structural inequalities. They are uniquely positioned to help advance community mental health and wellbeing, if they receive the right supports.

The Academy prioritizes capacity building in the 33 neighborhoods identified by the NYC Taskforce on Racial Inclusion and Equity as most impacted by COVID-19 and others experiencing high rates of health and socioeconomic disparities. We aim to more closely align efforts to understand and promote mental health with the insights and care networks in these communities.

Established in June 2021 with support from the Mayor's Office for Economic Opportunity and Mayor's Office of Community Mental Health, the Academy builds capacity for proactive and effective behavioral health support through services that include:

A) **Free courses.** We design high quality learning programs that equip providers with relevant behavioral health skills and tools to manage the emotional demands of their work. These courses are offered at no cost to NYC non-profit care providers.

B) **Pilot programs.** We use participatory methods to uplift healing wisdom in communities, co-develop and test community-based care models, and expand our knowledge about what works.

In its first 3.5 years, the Academy has:

- Established its mission, vision, and values.
- Created essential program infrastructure.
- Expanded to a team of 10 full and part-time staff and 20+ consultant collaborators.
- Developed more than 30 courses, reaching over 3,800+ unique learners from 250+ organizations across New York City.
- Developed and tested strategies to apply co-design and measure program outcomes.
- Supported two multi-year pilot programs: Youth Mental Health Advocates and the NYC Land-Based Healing Project. These programs center participatory methods and multidisciplinary partnerships to generate new knowledge and inform community-centered care.
- Secured over $750,000 in new funds, supplementing the Academy's core budget.

During this period, the Academy has focused on thoughtfully developing, piloting, and improving high quality programs at a small scale. We now seek consultants who can help the Academy strengthen, sustain, and spread our programs and impact. We expect the next phase of Academy growth to help us better articulate, assess, and apply our unique expertise, building from those things that we do or are positioned to do especially well. Over the next 3-5 years, this may include **advancing the internal capacity** we need to:

- Reach larger numbers of learners
- Improve existing learning programs and paths
- Add new learning programs
- Deepen our impact on individuals, teams, organizations, and communities reached by Academy programs
- Expand co-design, program evaluation, and program improvement
- Strengthen our role as consultants and capacity builders who can support good practice in the field
- Contribute to a wider reimagining of community behavioral health, including by publishing research, implementation tools, reflections, and other creative work
- Consider other services or ways of working that will help the Academy best realize its mission

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Academy seeks consultants with a demonstrated record of advancing organization or program growth, spread, and sustainability. We particularly seek those with expertise to help the Academy strengthen its capacity in one or more priority areas:

1. **Finance.** We seek to identify and pursue flexible, multi-year funding sources that will protect and expand the Academy's capacity to design and deliver high quality programs and extend our impact. We would like to assess:
    - Paths to generating earned revenue
    - Potential good-fit public or private funding
    - Other options to fund the Academy, where applicable
    - For good-fit options, steps that will position the Academy to secure or generate funds

From this assessment, we seek to develop a finance strategy that will support careful, phased growth, including by adequately resourcing Academy infrastructure and staffing.

Of note: Proposed strategies need to align with and advance Academy vision, mission, values, and goals. They also need to fit the Academy's positioning as an independent program located within a school of professional studies at a public university. Academy funds are currently administered through the Research Foundation of the City University of New York (RFCUNY).

2. **Infrastructure and capacity**. We seek to assess the internal structures, resources, and norms that will best meet Academy goals. This may include identifying opportunities to strengthen our current infrastructure, anticipate future capacity needs for both planned growth and ideas under consideration, and learn from or apply relevant successful models. We expect this assessment may include: staffing, staff development, leadership, governance, workflows, technology, partnerships, and other areas, as needed.

3. **Programming.** We seek to consult with those who have demonstrated experience spreading or scaling successful capacity building programs, particularly in community or global mental health, workforce development, adult learning, or other areas relevant to the Academy's work. We are eager to learn from successful examples of and best practices in:
    - Co-designing effective adult learning programs, especially in subjects related to the Academy's work
    - Contemplative education
    - Co-designing community-centered mental health interventions or care models
    - Facilitating wider dissemination of promising curricula by building community capacity, such as through train-the-trainer, certification, fellowship, or other program models
    - Creating pathways to academic credit from real-world experience and applied skills training
    - Partnership or network models to extend and strengthen the Academy's mental health capacity building work

DELIVERABLES AND BUDGET

Final scopes of work and budgets will be determined with selected consultant(s), based on deliverables. The overall budget for contracts that meet the goals of this call is expected not to exceed $25,000.

Deliverables may include, but need not be limited to, activities such as:

- Share relevant expertise and tools (such as through presentations, collaborative meetings, or other activities)
- Support the Academy to assess capacity in one or more key areas and identify opportunities for strengthening
- Recommend strategies or action steps to improve Academy capacity
- Co-create specific plans or resources with the Academy
- Other support, where applicable

The Academy will support this work, including by coordinating with consultants to establish overall project goals and processes; participate in project meetings; present relevant content; and more.

QUALIFICATIONS

We invite responses from experts with the experience and skills to help the Academy meet the goals of this call as outlined above. This expertise may be developed through a wide range of experience, education, credentials, or other activities.

We seek:

- Demonstrated successful experience advancing organization or program growth, spread, and sustainability in **one or more** of the priority areas highlighted in this call: **1) Finance**; **2) Infrastructure**; or, **3) Programming**. We are interested in outcomes or changes you have helped to facilitate, and your role in the process.

- Relevant subject matter expertise, based on the goal(s) you are responding to.

- A thoughtful and well-articulated approach to capacity building, including how you have adapted to particular projects or contexts; assessed the effectiveness of your efforts; and applied lessons to improve your approach over time.

- An understanding of, or curiosity about, the Academy's specific focus areas. These include, but are not limited to:
    - Community mental health, and relevant models from within the United States and global mental health
    - Multilayered causes of, and remedies for, related social, economic, and behavioral health inequities
    - Implementation of promising or evidence-based practices in community settings
    - Co-design and participatory research methods
    - Adult learning

Preferred qualifications include:

- Experience that bridges higher education with applied skills training or community capacity building efforts

- Experience or familiarity with the Academy's primary audience of NYC non-profit care providers, including community-based organizations, city or state agencies, community clinics, and more

We expect this role to include virtual meetings, other collaborative work, and independent work. Where feasible for all project team members, some meetings or activities may be held in person. We welcome applications from qualified candidates in NYC, and those outside NYC who believe they can meet project goals remotely.

TO APPLY

Individuals, groups, or organizations may respond to this call. **To apply, please send the following materials to academy4cbh@sps.cuny.edu with the subject "Academy Sustainability Call" by April 30, 2025**:

- a cover letter that highlights your relevant experience and expertise, including prior successful capacity building efforts
- the resume(s) or CV(s) of those who will work with the Academy on this project, or another description of the proposed project team and their qualifications, where appropriate

The Academy will review applications on a rolling basis. Select candidates will be invited to interview and present a work sample that demonstrates your expertise in one or more areas related to this project.