

## Request for Proposals (RFP)

**Posting date: April 1, 2019**

### Basic Information

Application Release Date: April 1, 2019

Application Due Date & Time: ~~April 19~~ April 26, 2019 ~~11:59:00~~ 5:00 PM EDT

Anticipated Contract Term: June 17, 2019-September 13, 2019

Anticipated Award Announcement Date: ~~May 3~~ May 10, 2019 12:00 PM

Number of Contracts Awarded: 1

Current Funding Amount Range: \$52,250

Questions: Questions regarding this application must be transmitted in writing to [fundrfp@cityhall.nyc.gov](mailto:fundrfp@cityhall.nyc.gov) by 5:00PM on ~~April 8~~ April 15, 2019. Answers will be posted on

<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/fund/rfp/rfp.page> on ~~April 12~~ April 19, 2019.

### Financial Health Focus Groups

The Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City ("Mayor's Fund"), with the assistance of the New York City Department of Consumer Affairs Office of Financial Empowerment ("DCA OFE", hereafter "OFE"), seek proposals from research firms to plan and implement focus groups and/or one-on-one interviews with New Yorkers with low incomes and moderate incomes in order to gain an understanding of New Yorkers' financial health and the issues they face to attain financial well-being.

### About the Department of Consumer Affairs Office of Financial Empowerment

The NYC Department of Consumer Affairs ("DCA") protects and enhances the daily economic lives of New Yorkers to create thriving communities. DCA licenses more than 81,000 businesses in more than 50 industries and enforces key consumer protection, licensing, and workplace laws that apply to countless more. By supporting businesses through equitable enforcement and access to resources and, by helping to resolve complaints, DCA protects the marketplace from predatory practices and strives to create a culture of compliance. Through its community outreach and the work of its offices of Financial Empowerment and Labor Policy & Standards, DCA empowers consumers and working families by providing the tools and resources they need to be educated consumers and to achieve financial health and work-life balance. DCA also conducts research and advocates for public policy that furthers its work to support New York City's communities.

Within DCA, OFE focuses on initiatives that support New Yorkers and communities with low incomes in building wealth and improving their financial health. OFE is the first local government initiative in the country with the mission to educate, empower, and protect New Yorkers and neighborhoods with low incomes so they can build assets and make the most of their financial resources. OFE uses data and research, policy, partnerships, and convenings to advance its mission. Using this model, OFE is able to develop, offer, and advocate for innovative programs and products for all New Yorkers.

## **Purpose**

Household financial health is far-reaching and intertwined with the greater health of local economies, necessitating the need for cities to play a significant role in protecting and promoting the financial security of their residents. Ensuring access to affordable housing, good jobs, equal access to opportunities, and access to safe and affordable financial products and services are all ways a city can help safeguard the financial health and well-being of its residents. But, to do so, city government must have a nuanced understanding of the problems faced everyday by people. To gain this understanding, researchers need a more localized picture than can be gleaned from currently available survey data collected at the national level, such as the Federal Reserve Board's Survey of Household Economics and Decision-making or Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's Financial Well-being Survey.

As a first step in filling this knowledge gap in New York City, OFE plans to collect information on the burgeoning issues facing specific communities through a series of focus groups. Because income is a necessary consideration when determining the financial health of a household, we will stratify our participants into two groups with separate focus groups for New Yorkers with low incomes, defined as earning 80 percent of area median income (AMI) or less, and moderate incomes, defined as earning between 80 and 120 percent of AMI. The focus groups for New Yorkers with low incomes could be replaced with one-on-one interviews to reduce stigma and decrease shame-induced response suppression.

## **Project Overview and Scope of Work and Services**

The prospective research firm will schedule, ensure participation in, and facilitate two (2) to three (3) focus groups comprised of New Yorkers with moderate-incomes and either ten (10) to fifteen (15) one-on-one interviews of New Yorkers with low incomes **or** an additional two (2) to three (3) focus groups of New Yorkers with low incomes to develop a preliminary understanding of the financial health of New Yorkers. The use of focus groups or one-on-one interviews with New Yorkers with low incomes is up to the discretion of the proposer. However, an explanation for the strategy chosen will be sought.

The focus group and interview process will involve guided and open-ended discussions centered around a key set of questions and topics of interest. All survey questions will be developed with OFE input and must be approved by OFE prior to implementation. The questions should take into consideration gaps in established surveys on financial health. For example, we are interested in the uptake of alternative financial products. Thus, we may ask participants to describe their experience with check-cashers or online payday lenders, or other alternative financial products.

Examples of topics/questions to be covered may include:

1. Whether individuals perceive themselves to be in good financial health, particularly as it pertains to:
  - Adequate savings
  - Financial planning
  - Sustainable debt levels
  - Healthy spending habits

2. Do participants experience income volatility and, if so, what strategies do they use to manage income volatility
3. What types of financial services and products are used for saving, income management, and expenditure smoothing
4. Whether participants use products that can be alternative financial products, such as pay day loans, rent-to-own stores, etc. Are participants aware of the cost and potential risk of these products
5. Additional topics to be determined

The selected vendor will:

1. Create a project work plan.
2. Obtain Institutional Review Board ("IRB") approval if needed.
3. Conduct background research and be well versed on financial health to inform participant selection, survey questions, and activities to be conducted.
4. In collaboration with OFE, determine composition of focus group and interview participants based on demographics of New York City, to be inclusive of the various communities with low and moderate incomes.
5. Develop consent forms and intake forms for focus group participants which must be approved by DCA's General Counsel Division.
6. Develop protocol for finding and recruiting participants for the focus groups and/or one-on-one interviews. Recruitment protocol should consider and make an effort to reduce selection bias.
7. Secure appropriate facilities to host focus groups and interviews.
8. Successfully recruit a minimum of eight (8) to fifteen (15) attendees per focus group and a minimum of ten (10) to fifteen (15) interviewees, if interview option is chosen. Incentives may be offered to encourage participation.
9. In collaboration with OFE, prepare moderators' guides to include protocols, and questions and/or activities for the focus groups and interviews.
10. Hold at least two (2) to three (3) focus groups (each with a minimum of 8-15 attendees) for each income demographic (New Yorkers with low incomes and moderate incomes) or, in lieu of focus groups for New Yorkers with low incomes, at least ten (10) to fifteen (15) interviews.
11. Record audio of focus groups and interviews and prepare transcripts from audio recording.
12. Analyze the audio recording and transcripts.
13. Submit a final report on the key themes and takeaways. Identify 10-15 New York City specific issues related to financial health to help inform future research.

The budget should include the following items:

- Personnel costs
- Appropriate facilities to host focus groups and interviews
- Costs associated with producing audio recordings and transcripts of focus groups and interviews
- Food and beverages provided to focus groups and interview participants (if applicable)
- Participation incentives provided to focus group and interview participants (if applicable)

### Project Timeline and Deliverables

OFE will work with the selected provider to define an overall work plan and timeline for the project but expects the project to start no later than June 17, 2019 and conclude no later than September 13, 2019.

Below is a table with a projected timeline and deliverable schedule. All deliverables must be completed no later than September 13, 2019.

Activity	Deliverable	Duration	Compensation
<b>Work Plan</b> Develop overall work plan, laying out the steps and tasks of the project.	___ Work plan detailing tasks	2 weeks (June 17 – June 28)	\$9,000 (disbursed with work plan approval, on or around June 14, 2019)
<b>Develop Focus Groups</b> - Develop protocols, conduct outreach and recruit participants for 2-3 focus groups with New Yorkers with moderate incomes and 10-15 interviews or 2-3 focus groups of New Yorkers with low incomes - Conduct background research - With DCA guidance, develop questions for focus groups and interviews - Develop moderator's guides to standardize interviews and focus groups	___ Draft List of Questions ___ Draft moderator's guide ___ Final moderator's guide	4 weeks (July 1 – July 26)	\$15,000
<b>Conduct Focus Groups</b> - Hold and record 2-3 focus groups of New Yorkers with moderate incomes - Hold and record 10-15 one-on-one interviews, or 2-3 focus groups with New Yorkers with low incomes - Prepare transcripts and recordings of focus groups and interviews	___ Transcripts of focus groups and interviews (if applicable) ___ Recordings of focus groups and interviews (if applicable)	2 weeks (July 29 – August 9)	\$10,000
<b>Final Report and Recommendations for Survey</b> - Analyze intake data, focus groups, and interviews - Identify and discuss key themes - Identify 10-15 New York City-specific issues related to financial health to inform future research	___ Draft Final Report (15-20 pages) ___ Final Report (15-20 pages) ___ 10-15 NYC specific issues	5 weeks (August 12 – September 13)	<del>\$20,000</del> <u>18,250</u>

### Selection Process

Award of the contract will be made to the applicant with the proposal that is the most favorable to the Project Overview and Scope of Work and Services as outlined in this RFP, and in the best interest of the City, taking into consideration the cost and other factors or criteria set forth in this RFP.

The selected contractor must have extensive knowledge and experience successfully conducting research that is substantively similar in nature, quality, and complexity to the services described in this solicitation. Proposals will be reviewed based on the following criteria:

Criteria	Maximum Point Value
1. Quality of Successful Relevant Experience/Expertise	40 points
2. Quality of Proposed Approach and Timeline	50 points
3. Cost	10 points

### To Apply

Proposals should include a narrative of up to five (5) pages (excluding appendices) detailing the following:

- A. The applicant's relevant experience in conducting research projects comparable to the above. This should include subject matter researched, type of project, length and extent of project, and methodology.
- B. The applicant's proposed approach to fulfilling the work described above, including determining how to target and successfully recruit participants, conduct focus groups and related activities with participants that are representative of different communities in New York City. Proposers should include the proposed strategy, with explanation, for carrying out the focus group and/or interview process, including staffing plan and a description of staff qualifications.
- C. Proposed project timeline.
- D. Budget and narrative of expenses (as an appendix). The budget should provide a clear assessment of all costs associated with the implementation of the project, which may not exceed \$52,250 if applying for the full amount. Please see Project Overview and Scope of Work for details.
- E. Resumes of key staff (as an appendix).
- F. A completed [Doing Business Data Form](#) (as an appendix)

Please submit proposals (no more than five (5) pages, excluding appendices) as a single attachment via email to [fundrfp@cityhall.nyc.gov](mailto:fundrfp@cityhall.nyc.gov) by **5:00 PM EDT on ~~April 19~~ April 26, 2019**. The subject line of all proposals should read: "Financial Health Focus Groups". Applicants may choose to apply for the full funding amount above or a portion of it.