REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

**TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY**

**IN PERSON SUPPORT GROUPS**

RFI

August 29, 2024

STATE OF WASHINGTON

## DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES (DSHS)

## AGING AND LONG TERM SUPPORT ADMINISTRATION (ALTSA)

## DIVISION OF HOME AND COMMUNITY SERVICES (HCS)

### Blake Office Park East, 4410 10th Avenue SE • PO Box 45600 • Lacey WA 98503

1. **Purpose**

The purpose of this RFI is to solicit information regarding interest, availability and geographic reach from organizations interested in serving one or more [accountable community of health](https://www.hca.wa.gov/assets/program/ach-map.pdf) regions by facilitating at least one in-person support group within the region at least quarterly, and are free of charge.

1. **Background**

A traumatic brain injury (TBI) is one caused by physical trauma resulting from incidents involving motor vehicles, sporting events, falls, and physical assaults. A TBI shall be of sufficient severity to result in impairments in one or more of the following areas: cognition; language memory; attention; reasoning; abstract thinking; judgment; problem solving; sensory, perceptual, and motor abilities; psychosocial behavior; physical functions; or information processing.

Traumatic brain injury is a serious public health problem that affects thousands of people annually in Washington State.

**Traumatic Brain Injury Strategic Partnership Advisory Council**

The [Traumatic Brain Injury Strategic Partnership Advisory Council of Washington State](https://www.dshs.wa.gov/altsa/traumatic-brain-injury/washington-traumatic-brain-injury-strategic-partnership-advisory-council) (TBI Council) was created to support the TBI community (RCW 74.31). It consists of 25 members from public and private sectors, individuals with TBI and their family members, medical and human service providers, caregivers, sovereign tribal nations, and state agencies.

The TBI Council partners with and advises the Department of Social and Health Services and other state agencies to:

* Spread awareness and education about TBI and prevention.
* Identify and advise on needs and gaps in TBI services, resources, and programs.
* Create partnerships and coordinate across public/private sectors.

The TBI Council believes both comprehensive, and healthy community planning, is needed to best serve the needs of our TBI communities in Washington state. Updated every two years, the [Comprehensive Plan](https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/ALTSA/tbi/documents/2023-01-Traumatic-Brain-Injury-Council-Comprehensive-Statewide-Plan.pdf) is a roadmap addressing the unique needs of residents impacted by TBI.

**VIRTUAL Traumatic Brain Injury Support Groups**

The state of Washington has a robust offering of TBI virtual support groups. These support groups are designed to aid in the development of long-term knowledge and generic problem-solving skills to help attendees overcome barriers to sustaining a fulfilling life. Groups emphasize connection and a person-centered approach, as well as education and engagement after sustaining a TBI.

On average each year the state offers 225+ TBI virtual support groups sessions tailored to support TBI, paid and unpaid caregivers, providers, veterans, and people in corrections facilities.

**IN-PERSON Support Groups**

Washington has always had non-state-sponsored in-person TBI support groups available offered through social services, non-profits, TBI-related medical offices, hospitals and other private businesses. These support groups continue to run independently of state oversight and can be found, if available, by contacting 2-1-1.

During the 2024 legislative session, the state of Washington issued a budget proviso that says:

“$125,000 of the general fund-state appropriation for fiscal year 2025 is provided solely for the Washington traumatic brain injury strategic partnership advisory council to support **at least one in-person support group in each region of the state served by an accountable community of health as defined in RCW 82.04.43395. The council shall provide recommendations to the department on the criteria to be used in selecting the programs to receive funding.** The criteria must reflect the diversity of individuals with traumatic brain injuries, including the range of cognitive and financial barriers that individuals with traumatic brain injuries may experience with accessing web-based services. Preference must be given to programs that facilitate support groups led by individuals with direct lived experience with traumatic brain injuries or individuals certified as brain injury specialists. Each program that receives funding under this section must ensure that the in-person or virtual support groups **meet at least quarterly** and are free of charge. The department must approve at least one facilitation training curriculum specific to brain injury to be used by the programs that receive funding under this section.”

This funding is intended to be contracted to organizations in each region of the state served by an accountable community of health, in order to facilitate at least quarterly in-person support groups to individuals with traumatic brain injuries.

1. **Project Scope**

ALTSA, on behalf of the Traumatic Brain Injury Strategic Partnership Advisory Council of Washington State (TBI Council), aims to develop quarterly in-person support groups that increase awareness and supportive resources that aid in the development of long-term knowledge and generic problem-solving skills to help attendees overcome barriers to sustaining a fulfilling life among people with traumatic brain injury across the state.

The $125,000 allocated for fiscal year 2025, for in-person support groups will be divided equally among organizations interested in providing in-person support groups geographically located in the nine accountable community of health regions. Equally distributed, this provides each regionally geographically area with $13,888.88 for four in-person support groups (one per quarter). This is $3,472.22 per support group session.

* Annual Statewide Budget - $125,000
* ACH Region Annual Budget - $13,888 (9 regions equally)
* Support Group Session Budget - $3,472 (quarterly meetings)

**This funding is provided for the hosting and delivery of in-person support groups and can be spent on:** facilitator training, curriculum, location rental, advertising materials, sign language interpreter, CART captioning services

**This funding cannot be spent on:** food/refreshments or any in-person support group that does not meet accessibility and equality requirements as outlined by the state.

**Data-Driven Informed Decision Making**

The TBI Council expects each contractor to document and report back on the success (and lessons learned) from in-person support groups.

**Required reporting, includes but is not limited to:**

* Location/times/regularity of support groups
* Facilitators
* Number of people attending each session (vs. how many RSVP)
* Barriers and obstacles that prevent successes
* Training curriculum, agendas from each session

Transparent reporting is necessary for the Traumatic Brain Injury Strategic Partnership Advisory Council of Washington State (TBI Council) to make informed decisions and recommendations for following years. Proper documentation and reporting ensure support groups are safe, equitable and accessible spaces.

**Protection and Advocacy for a Vulnerable Population**

It is paramount that the delivery of these in-person support groups be provided with the upmost standards of ethics and intent. The state must protect this vulnerable population from businesses or organizations seeking personal and/or financial gain.

Under no circumstances should businesses or individuals seek personal or financial gain from these in-person support groups. This includes, but is not limited to:

* Law firms or legal representatives
* Medical services
* Insurance providers
* Advocacy groups

**In-Person Support Group Guidelines & Considerations**

Regardless of who or how in-person statewide support groups are delivered these considerations should be addressed per TBI Council Executive Committee recommendation:

* Meeting location should always be a public facility (no home meetings), close to bus lines/routes for accessibility, have disabled parking and ramps, bathroom support bars and other state-mandated accessibility requirements. Facility must accommodate accessible seating for up to 25 people. Streaming capabilities are strongly recommended to increase accessibility\*
* The meeting location should have free and accessible internet access allowing facilitators/attendees access to online statewide TBI resources
* Two facilitators should be present at every meeting and must have First-Aid Training and De-escalation Training. Facilitators should have access to (and be trained to use) First Aid Kit, AED, Narcan 9.
* Meetings should be scheduled and offered within state mandated times – such as between 5 to 8 p.m. on weeknights; between 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on weekends. Preference for session length should be predetermined – for example 1.5 hours.
* Every session requires a detailed education/agenda outlining plan and purpose
* Each regional area should submit an advertising plan.
* Translations services including Sign language should be available
* Must follow state allowed food/beverage guidelines
* No legal services offered.
* Liability insurance required.
* An evaluation plan should be submitted prior to first meeting.
* Meeting evaluation should be offered to all participants at the end of each meeting.
* Groups must maintain a minimal number of regular attendees to be effective.

**Every TBI Support Group Facilitator should reference, and be familiar with, the Washington state** [**TBI Support Group Guide**](https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/ALTSA/tbi/documents/TBI-Support-Group-Guide.pdf)**. This guide is designed to walk interested organizations through creating a support group, choosing the best facilitator(s), managing support group sessions, and connecting with available resources to best educate and advocate for your support group members.**

1. **Provider Response**

Interested parties should respond by sending a completed Provider Response form, as an attachment in an email, to the RFI Coordinator, at the email address indicated in the RFI Coordinator section below, by **September 16, 2024**. Please see ***Attachment A: Provider Response***.

Questions related to this RFI should be submitted by email to the RFI Coordinator using the contact information indicated in the RFI Coordinator section below by September 13, 2024. Answer to the questions will be emailed no later than September 20, 2024.

1. **“No Contract Award”**

Participation in this RFI is voluntary. DSHS will not award any contracts based on information received in response to this RFI. Any future contract that may be awarded must comply with state procurement requirements.

# **RFI COORDINATOR**

RFI questions and submittal of the Provider Response are to be emailed to:

Dru Aubert, Care Management Unit Manager

Aging and Long-Term Support Administration, Home and Community Services

Washington State Department of Social and Health Services

360-725-2524

dru.aubert@dshs.wa.gov

**ATTACHMENT A: PROVIDER RESPONSE**

**TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY IN PERSON SUPPORT GROUPS**

**Please provide brief answers to each of the following questions and send as an attachment to** [dru.aubert@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:dru.aubert@dshs.wa.gov) **by close of business on September 16, 2024.**

Provide the name of Agency or Entity responding to this RFI, including name, email and phone number of the most appropriate person to contact.

Briefly describe the traumatic brain injury and in-person support group facilitation expertise and resources the Entity brings to the table that can be leveraged for this project, particularly as related to: (a) the diversity of individuals with traumatic brain injuries, and (b) the range of cognitive and financial barriers that individuals with traumatic brain injuries may experience with accessing services, such as in-person support groups or accessing web-based services.

Briefly describe connections/relationships the Entity has with traumatic brain injury resources across the state, including any experience in working with: (a) the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) and the Traumatic Brain Injury Strategic Partnership Advisory Council of Washington State (TBI Council), (b) accountable communities of health programs and/or (c) the state’s Aging Network (i.e., Area Agencies on Aging and subcontractors).

Describe the geographic areas in which the Entity foresees a current or potential presence that could be advantageous to this project i.e., in terms of where the Entity may be able to recruit and coordinate with facilitators to engage in the in-person support group services in the nine accountable communities of health described in this RFI.

The minimum requirement for this contract is one in-person support group per quarter. Please describe whether you would meet the minimum requirement or exceed the minimum requirement, and by how much?

Provide an estimate of the date by which your agency, and a facilitator, would be available to start work towards project objectives.

Confirm the Entity’s understanding of: the budget proviso, its allocation, and funding is provided for the hosting and delivery of in-person support groups; differentiating what funds can and cannot be spent on; required reporting; protection and advocacy for a vulnerable population; in-person support group guidelines & considerations; and that every TBI Support Group Facilitator should reference, and be familiar with, the Washington state TBI Support Group Guide. See section 3, Project Scope, above.