



"Launching Diversion Initiatives to Reduce Racial Disparities in Incarceration"
Office of the Mayor
Pittsburgh, PA

PROJECT CONTEXT

Over the last thirty years, rates of mental and behavioral health issues have risen while access to critical services has become increasingly limited and challenging to obtain. In the wake of this, police are often sent to intervene in a behavioral or mental health crisis, leading to a cycle of incarceration for the individuals involved. In Allegheny County alone, 35% of inmates at the County jail are treated for mental health issues, 15% of those diagnosed with a severe mental illness such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or major depression. These individuals average longer jail time and are more likely to return to jail. This crisis only deepens when the disparities between race, access to mental health programs and the criminal justice system are examined, leaving Black people more vulnerable and disproportionately affected by these systems. In 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement created an opening to rethink how American communities pursue public health, safety, and equity. Mainly, passionate demands have been made to dismantle our nation's endemic over-reliance on policing.

Throughout the US, local governments are committing to examine and re-imagining police utilization, training, hiring, and monitoring in their communities. The City of Pittsburgh is no exception, pledging to create safer and healthier communities, invest in critical services, advance racial equity and racial justice, reform its criminal justice system, and uplift, protect, and improve the quality of life for its residents of color. This includes implementing and scaling diversion programs. Diversion programs connect residents with the resources without sending them into the criminal justice system, and addressing the root causes of low-level crime such as resource alignment and/or mental or behavioral health issues.

In coordination with the [Foundation of HOPE](#), the City has already established the HOPE Diversion Program targeted at youth ages 12-26 who commit low-level crime. The program provides youth with counseling, treatment, and individualized action plans and has already shown tremendous success. In the first year of the program, 96% of the youth referred did not recommit any offense, and 100% of those who completed the program successfully were not charged with a new offense within six months of program completion. The City is now looking to implement an additional Adult Diversion Program with the Foundation of HOPE, based on other law enforcement assisted diversion program examples. Diversion programs have been proven to result in significantly lower arrest rates, stronger relationships between police and community members, and increases in the health and well-being of program participants.

The City of Pittsburgh is dedicated to launching this Adult Diversion Program within the next year. To support this work, the City will partner with FUSE Corps to host an Executive Fellow for one year to develop a holistic and agile plan for implementing and scaling the City's Adult Diversion Program. This program will utilize national best practices, and consider each unique neighborhood zone and the history of policing in the City. Through this work, the City will advance racial equity and justice, increase trust between the community and the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police, and address the unmet needs of Pittsburgh's Black and Brown communities, improving both the mental and physical health of all residents.



PROJECT SUMMARY & POTENTIAL DELIVERABLES

The following provides a general overview of the proposed Executive Fellowship project. This summary and the potential deliverables will be collaboratively revisited by the host agency, the Executive Fellow, and FUSE staff during the first few months of the Executive Fellowship, after which a revised scope of work will be developed and agreed upon by the FUSE Executive Fellow and the host agency.

Starting May 3, 2021, it is proposed that the FUSE Executive Fellow will develop a thorough and holistic implementation plan for the City's Adult Diversion Program. The Executive Fellow will conduct an initial listening tour and quickly build deep relationships with a wide range of critical stakeholders, including staff across City Departments, focusing on the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police and Office of Community Health and Safety; the Congress of Neighboring Communities ([CONNECT](#)), specifically their [LEAD](#) Policy Coordinating Group; content experts, academic institutions and other cities with successful diversion programs, reviewing best practices; and nonprofits and community-based organizations, primarily the Foundation of HOPE. These conversations will be essential for the Executive Fellow to understand the barriers to implementing the program and building cross-departmental collaborations and private-public partnerships to facilitate implementation.

The Executive Fellow will map out a one-year, short-term plan for implementing the program in at least two police zones. The Executive Fellow will build internal infrastructure for the program, including necessary technology and training for officers and diversion case managers; establishing key communication pathways between officers, case managers, the District Attorney, and Magisterial District Judges; and formalizing processes for identifying those eligible for the program – incentivizing the program and building trust with the community. This plan will reflect recommendations for diversion efforts made by the [Community Task Force on Police Reform](#), including developing zone-specific processes and programming. The Executive Fellow will also formalize a structure for coordinating and facilitating meetings across stakeholders to ensure consistent communication.

In the next phase, the Executive Fellow will create a holistic and agile implementation plan to scale the program citywide. The plan will include a cohesive strategy around the program's execution, establishing clear roles of internal and external stakeholders, workflows, timelines around milestones, and metrics for tracking progress. This will include building specific action plans, unique timelines, and modeling the financial commitments and resource investments required for scaling the initiative across each zone. The Executive Fellow will initiate activities that are most urgent and or are considered low-hanging fruit. This will include capacity building and stewardship of employee adoption and usage of the new processes and resources, embedding the program as an essential element of police academy trainings and service trainings. The Executive Fellow will also determine future potential partnerships to sustain the program financially and otherwise. The Executive Fellow should broadly share progress on the initiative, communicating as many visible wins as possible to the public. Through the adoption of this Adult Diversion program, public safety in the City will begin to transform and help residents live thriving, healthy lives.

By April 2022, the Executive Fellow will have overseen critical stages of implementing the program, making sure it is as efficient and effective as possible. This will include the following:

- *Develop and execute on a short-term plan that leads to concrete "early wins"* – Implement and address "low-hanging fruit," establish clear lines of communication across stakeholders, map gaps in resources, form new processes, craft neighborhood-specific solutions and take in to account the unique characteristics and history of each zone, identify a timeline for broader integration
- *Engage stakeholders and catalyze buy-in* – Understand roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders, identify shared goals for the implementation of the program in the first two zones, identify barriers to implementing the program and build cross-departmental collaborations and private-public partnerships that can facilitate implementation; solicit and incorporate input from stakeholders to build consensus around the plan
- *Develop implementation framework and roll-out initiative citywide* – Establish framework outlining short and long-term goals, priority areas, and clear roles of internal and external stakeholders, support capacity building, creating internal and external infrastructure and systems; detail resources and financial commitments needed to scale the program
- *Support long-term implementation* – Broadly share progress on the initiative, work with leadership across Departments to manage the initiative; measure and broadly share progress towards goals; mold plan to align with the Youth Diversion program, and integrate accountability mechanisms for long-term deployment of the initiative

KEY STAKEHOLDERS

- **Executive Sponsor** – **Lindsay Powell**, Assistant Chief of Staff, *Office of the Mayor*
- **Project Supervisor** – **Laura Drogowski**, Critical Communities Manager, *Office of the Mayor*
- Mica Williams, Program Director – Adult Diversion, *Foundation of HOPE*
- Pittsburgh Bureau of Police leadership

QUALIFICATIONS

- At least 15 years of professional experience in a relevant field, particularly with a background in program development and implementation
- Experience working in politically charged or bureaucratic environments, prowess in managing delicate situations or stakeholders with patience
- Understanding of diversion models and community-based police reform preferred but not required
- Experience working with law enforcement a major plus
- Strong change management, having ensured projects meet objectives on time and on budget
- Robust success in cultivating partnerships, relationship and coalition building, and fostering collaborative environments
- Superior critical thinking and analytical skills
- Ability to synthesize complex information into clear and concise recommendations
- Ability to relate to a wide variety of diverse audiences with strong emotional intelligence and empathy



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- Excellent stakeholder engagement skills and the ability to use facilitative leadership techniques to coordinate stakeholder activities
 - Ability to create direction and movement within potentially ambiguous environments
 - Self-motivated, goal-oriented, resilient, and entrepreneurial leader who can also be an independent worker
 - Persistent in obtaining information and creatively resourceful in identifying solutions to complex problems
 - Exceptional written and verbal communication skills with an ease in public presentations
 - Understands the need for solutions to support all people in a community regardless of race, religion, gender, immigration status, or ethnicity

FUSE Corps is an equal opportunity employer with a core value of incorporating diverse perspectives into our work at every level. We encourage candidates from all backgrounds to apply for this position.