



**STATE OF TENNESSEE  
TENNESSEE CORRECTIONS INSTITUTE**

**REQUEST FOR INFORMATION  
FOR  
CORRECTIONAL OFFICER MENTAL WELLNESS -  
STUDY AND TRAINING COURSE**

**RFI # 31609-27900  
05/18/22**

**1. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:**

The State of Tennessee, Tennessee Corrections Institute (TCI) issues this Request for Information ("RFI") for the purpose of creating a two-pronged project for addressing employee mental health and wellness for staff employed in local correctional facilities. We appreciate your input and participation in this process.

TCI is seeking a partner who will be able to design and execute a study in up to six (6) jails in Tennessee focused on determining what the leading stress factors for jail employees is, and what is currently being done to mitigate that stress. The study would review current literature and resources that are available from national and academic sources, develop tools and materials, including a training curriculum, that can be provided to jails that are customized to Tennessee, and assist in executing three to six regional training workshops during the course of the contract.

**2. BACKGROUND:**

Tennessee Corrections Institute under the authority of Tennessee Code Annotated 41-4-140, is required to establish minimum standards for adult local jails, lockups, workhouses, and detention facilities in the state. TCI also educates local correctional staff while providing and monitoring basic certification and annual in-service training for personnel within local adult correctional detention facilities.

Correctional Officers have a stressful job that leads to burnout and mental health issues including depression, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), anxiety, and much more. Correctional Officers suffer from higher levels of suicide and PTSD than other law enforcement officers and the military<sup>1</sup>. Correctional Officers often work 12-hour shifts, engage with justice-involved individuals with varying degrees of mental illness and/or propensities for violence, are exposed to communicable diseases, are often underpaid, and many are reticent of asking for help due to a culture of self-reliance and skepticism. These issues culminate in a high-turnover rate, high divorce rate, and often lead to health and wellness issues for the employee and their family.

TCI published a study on 10/14/2021 looking into jail staffing issues. The panel involved made

five recommendations that jails should implement in order to improve working conditions and reduce staff turnover. Addressing the work/life balance of correctional staff is one of the recommendations. TCI now seeks a partner to help us with this goal.

TCI envisions a study to be performed in up to six jails in Tennessee. Two small, two medium-sized, and two large-sized jails. TCI will assist the vendor with the necessary preparations and networking. We envision the study to be qualitative in nature with interviews of an appropriate percentage of staff (as recommended by the vendor) about jail working conditions, mental wellness, mental illness, substance use and other suboptimal coping techniques, as well as available resources to mitigate working stress (e.g. Employee Assistance Program).

TCI would like the vendor to also perform a literature review of various programs available such as, but not limited to, the *Officer Health and Wellness Agency Assessment Tool and Action Planning Roadmap* (IACP/BJA/VALOR), Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act Report to Congress and the accompanying Eleven Case Studies. From this literature review, we would like a customized curriculum and suite of helpful resource materials developed for Tennessee jails. TCI foresees the vendor assisting with a training program executed after the study concludes. This would include both a training for those staff that would fulfill the role of "Peer Support Team" and a Training for Trainers program. The program should be developed so that it is easily implemented, does not require a background in mental health or counseling, not require a large ongoing expenditure for the program to continue, and it should be easy-to-use. At the conclusion of the project, the program should be able to continue in perpetuity without much technical assistance.

The individuals trained in this program will not be licensed, social workers or other mental health experts. They will be passionate volunteer employees that work in jails in Tennessee, and who are trusted by their fellow employees. The program may provide some limited Technical Assistance at the conclusion of the training. A follow-up study a year after implementation to measure program effectiveness may be considered. TCI is open to suggestions as the vendor will function as the agency's Technical Assistance provider.

TCI prefers the study to be completed prior to spring of 2023 with the execution of training in the summer of 2023 with the presumption that any RFP award coming from this RFI would be awarded in the fall of 2022. This RFI seeks an estimated timetable for projects.

END STATE	
1.	Completed study performed as interviews of a % of staff in up to six local jails. This may include a survey and/or focus groups as appropriate per the vendor. Topics of exploration include, but are not limited to: current mental health status, work stress, home-life stress, current activities to mitigate stress, employer EAP options, employer EAP understanding of law enforcement culture and jail subculture, and employer's policies for promoting employee mental wellness and work/life balance.
2.	A completed training curriculum, designed to prepare key facility staff in the basics of making referrals to services, identifying services, and executive effective programs designed to promote correctional staff wellness. This may include a course on emotional resiliency or similar topic.

3.	An executed training program and toolkit that can be published and provided to trainees. Limited technical assistance following the training. TCI may be interested in a follow-up study at one year after the training to determine training effectiveness.
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### 3. COMMUNICATIONS:

3.1. Please submit your response to this RFI to this RFI via email to [Jason.J.Smith@tn.gov](mailto:Jason.J.Smith@tn.gov) by no later than the Response Deadline Date specified in Section 4. In the event your response with all attachments and supporting documentation will exceed 15 megabytes in total, please place the documents in a zip file or make two or more submissions such that the documents per email submission do not exceed 15 megabytes.

3.2. Please feel free to contact the Tennessee Corrections Institute with any questions regarding this RFI. The main point of contact will be:

Jason J. Smith, Project Manager  
Tennessee Corrections Institute  
279D Stewarts Ferry Pike, Nashville, TN 37214  
615-741-3786  
Email: [Jason.J.Smith@tn.gov](mailto:Jason.J.Smith@tn.gov)

3.3. Please reference RFI # **31609-27900** with all communications to this RFI.

#### 3.4. Written Questions and Comments

If you have any questions or comments concerning this RFI, you are required to email them to the agency's Project Manager identified above in Section 3.2 by no later than the Written Questions and Comments Deadline detailed in Section 4. Schedule of Events. The State will also post a copy of the amendment to the following website:

<https://www.tn.gov/generalservices/procurement/central-procurement-office--cpo-/supplier-information/request-for-proposals--rfp--opportunities1.html>

### 4. RFI SCHEDULE OF EVENTS:

EVENT		TIME (Central Time Zone)	DATE (all dates are State business days)
1.	RFI Issued		05/18/2022
2.	Written Questions and Comments Deadline	4:30 PM	06/01/22
3.	State's Response to Questions and Comments		06/07/22
4.	RFI Response Deadline	4:30 PM	06/17/22

## 5. GENERAL INFORMATION:

- 5.1. Please note that responding to this RFI is not a prerequisite for responding to any future solicitations related to this project and a response to this RFI will not create any contract rights. Responses to this RFI will become property of the State.
- 5.2. The information gathered during this RFI is part of an ongoing procurement. In order to prevent an unfair advantage among potential respondents, the RFI responses will not be available until after the completion of evaluation of any responses, proposals, or bids resulting from a Request for Qualifications, Request for Proposals, Invitation to Bid or other procurement method. In the event that the state chooses not to go further in the procurement process and responses are never evaluated, the responses to the procurement including the responses to the RFI, will be considered confidential by the State.
- 5.3. The State will not pay for any costs associated with responding to this RFI.

## 6. INFORMATIONAL FORMS:

The State is requesting the following information from all interested parties. Please fill out the following forms:

RFI # 31609-27900	
TECHNICAL INFORMATIONAL FORM	
1.	RESPONDENT LEGAL ENTITY NAME:
2.	RESPONDENT CONTACT PERSON: Name, Title: Address: Phone Number: Email:
3.	Provide a brief description of your company's or firm's experience in: a. providing studies and performing analyses. b. in developing curricula and resource materials c. facilitating adult learning d. providing technical assistance
4.	Provide a brief narrative that illustrates how the Respondent would manage, ensure completion

of, and accomplish the Department's Services outlined in the "Statement of Purpose" section of this Request for Information.
5. Describe what types of studies/research your firm would recommend (qualitative, quantitative, literature review, etc.) and how long you estimate the research and analysis portion of this project would take.
6. Provide an estimate on how long your firm believes the training section of the project should take. This should include how long each class is estimated to take (e.g. 2-3 days @ 8 hours a day) and how your firm would handle the training (online vs. in-person), and how many people would be needed to accomplish the project.
7. Does your agency have experience working in the Criminal Justice sector or Mental Health sector in Tennessee? If yes, please provide a brief description of which agencies you have collaborated with and what topics your firm or your firm's staff have experience in.
8. Thinking of agency bandwidth (staff availability, other projects in the pipeline), when would your company or firm be able to start working on the study presuming a contract was awarded in September of 2022.
9. Please describe your agency's employee background check policy (if any).
10. Please provide your company's website address:
11. List three questions your firm might ask as part of the officer interviews, and provide a one-two sentence description of why the question is helpful.
12. If your company or firm does not, for example, have the experience to perform training, but has experience completing surveys and research analysis (or vice versa), please describe how you will identify a partner to work with that will supplement/complement your finished products.
13. Does your firm recommend a follow-up study to be performed after the initial training is performed? Why or why not? And if so, at what time intervals?
14. Besides interviews, focus groups, and/or survey questionnaires, what other types of research gathering should TCI be considering?

<b>COST INFORMATIONAL FORM</b>
1. Describe what pricing units you typically utilize for similar services or goods (e.g., per hour, each, etc.):

2. Describe the typical price range for similar services or goods

**ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS**

1. Please provide input on alternative approaches or additional things to consider that might benefit the State:

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<sup>i</sup> *The prison experience for corrections staff*. Vera Institute of Justice. (n.d.). Retrieved May 13, 2022, from <https://www.vera.org/reimagining-prison-web-report/examining-prisons-today/the-prison-experience-for-corrections-staff#:~:text=Ibid.%2C%2023%2D24.,of%20the%20working%2Dage%20population.>