



# Request for Approval for Use of Innovation Funds for Community Planning Process for Innovation Project(s)

Innovation Project Name	Community Planning Process for Innovation Project(s)
Total INN Funding Requested	\$675,000
Duration of Innovation Project	3 Years (FY 2023-24 - FY 2025-26)
Primary Purpose	Promote interagency and community collaboration related to mental health services or supports or outcomes

## Introduction

In 1960, Tri-City Mental Health Authority (Tri-City) was formed and established through a Joint Powers Authority Agreement between the cities of Pomona, Claremont, and La Verne. This union established Tri-City as a “county” and mental health authority for these three cities. For more than 60 years, Tri-City has provided services that are clinically, culturally, and linguistically appropriate for community members. Tri-City’s commitment and belief in wellness and recovery for each of our clients has guided our service delivery and program development.

Community involvement and stakeholder input has been the cornerstone of MHSA program planning and development for Tri-City since the passage of the Mental Health Services Act in 2004. The community planning process is a required element of the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA), intended to meaningfully involve the community in identifying mental health needs and priorities, program planning, implementation, etc. (Welfare and Institutions Code, [WIC] §5845[a]) Tri-City is fully invested in having a robust community planning process and we value our community and the feedback they provide us. With this in mind, and the approval of this plan, we are committed to developing and improving our approach to stakeholder involvement to ensure meaningful input from all those we serve.

## Previous Efforts

Tri-City has consistently engaged in a community planning process that ensures our culturally, economically, and generationally diverse community needs are factored into and addressed in our MHSA Three-Year Plans and Annual Updates as well as specific projects and plans. Efforts to reach community stakeholders include multiple community stakeholder meetings, providing both paper and online community capacity surveys in both English and Spanish, seeking feedback at meetings where stakeholders are present, request for providers to conduct feedback forums with clients, and



the creation of an online Innovation Idea survey where stakeholders can submit new ideas year-round. Yet despite these efforts, Tri-City still struggles to attract participants for our stakeholder meetings and have a low completion rate for surveys and online feedback opportunities.

With the onset of the COVID pandemic, Tri-City was able to pivot from in-person stakeholder meetings to a virtual platform. However, we found that many of our community members did not have the ability to access meetings online or found it difficult to navigate the platform. Access to computers was also a challenge for some individuals as well. Although we provided computers at our Wellness Center, access to the Center was limited due to COVID restrictions and lack of transportation also contributed to low participation.

Additional issues that were discovered included:

- Loss of connection with the community we serve.
- Need for face-to-face interactions to learn about the needs of the diverse groups in our catchment area.
- Desire to go out into the community and “meet them where they are” at local centers and locations frequented by stakeholders.
- Focused advertisement in local community papers and newsletters where stakeholder have access and will read based on their interests.
- Lack of knowledge as to when and where to hold stakeholder meetings that will draw the largest attendance.
- Adequate staff to manage Tri-City's current Innovation projects while conducting focus groups with stakeholders that provide meaningful feedback to develop and new and viable project that will meet the needs of the community, MHSOAC standards and Innovation regulations.

As with many agencies and organizations, Tri-City has struggled with both staff recruitment and retention. While it still is increasingly difficult to remain competitive, attract, and retain qualified staff, Tri-City's implementation of hiring incentives such as our sign-on bonus, hybrid work schedules, hazard and longevity pay have helped to create a more attractive compensation and benefit package. Tri-City currently has one FTE Innovation Coordinator who is overseeing two current Innovation projects both of which are in collaboration with other counties:

1. Help@Hand
2. Psychiatric Advance Directives (PADs)

Although Tri-City has found it helpful to engage with other counties in collaborative projects, not all projects offered are appropriate for the needs of Tri-City. Therefore, it is important that Tri-City have



the opportunity and support to develop projects that are designed specifically for the needs of our community members.

## Why This Project is Needed

In June 2021, Tri-City met with the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC) through the Delegated Authority process to present a new Innovation project, Restorative Practices for Improving Mental Health (RPIMH). Although this project was the product of stakeholder involvement, including workgroups, stakeholder meetings, Public Hearing, Mental Health Commission and Governing Board approval, the project was denied by the MHSOAC resulting in a reversion of Innovation funds. Reasons given for the rejection included that the concept was not innovative enough and there were not enough stakeholders involved in the decision process even though the community planning process took place during the pandemic, which contributed to the low turnout. It is our hope that this new approach will allow us the time to develop a long-term strategy for how to engage, assess, and create an effective Innovation Community Planning Process and thereby create a project that is truly built on the needs and desires of our clients, consumers, and community members.

With the pending reduction in COVID restrictions, we feel this is the ideal time to restructure our community outreach and engagement approach to community planning for our next Innovation project(s). Our goal is to be strategic when connecting with community members and taking the necessary time to research, plan and develop future Innovation projects that are meaningful and will have an impact on our community. The post COVID world is far different from what we experienced before and many of the previous ways of collecting community feedback may not be as effective as they were pre COVID. By engaging outside contractors with an expertise in specific areas to support these efforts, our staff will be able to work faster and collaboratively while incorporating lessons learned into future projects.

Tri-City is ready to finalize the community planning process for the next Innovation project. With this in mind, Tri-City has learned and recognized that planning for an Innovation project requires consistent input from stakeholders as well as a high level of education and review of Innovation plan guidelines and regulations. In addition, identifying a plan that can be developed based on community needs and/or gaps in access to services, can be time consuming and requires multiple interactions, and opportunity for feedback.

In preparation for this plan, five virtual Innovation workgroups were held. In addition, several ideas were proposed through the Innovation Idea Survey which is posted on Tri-City's website. After multiple discussions and project proposals, the group agreed that it was important to expand the pool of participants and implement a more formal process which would include focus groups embedded in the community, developing relationships with cultural brokers, and stronger peer involvement including playing a role in community outreach and engagement.



## The Plan

This proposal seeks approval to utilize Innovation funds in the amount of \$675,000 over three years to develop a robust and effective strategic community planning process and related activities resulting in future Innovation plans that are calculated, meaningful, and effective. Innovation community planning and related activities include, but not be limited to:

- Peer support contracted through provider whose peer staff are subject matter experts specializing in providing population-center training, programming, focus groups and advocacy.
- Marketing strategies and materials to reach the broader community (i.e., flyers/announcements, online surveys, etc.)
- Program supplies (i.e., stipends for consumers and family members; transportation cost for consumers and family members to attend in person meetings, as appropriate; presentation/discussion materials; printing cost, etc.)
- Innovation staff time, such as researching concepts, developing materials, coordinating and/or facilitating meetings, drafting proposals, etc.
- Peer to conduct focus groups in collaboration with other staff and/or marketing personnel to outreach to and engage the following populations:
  - Peers (i.e. individuals with lived experience) including Tri-City staff, clients and community members
  - African Americans
  - Hispanic and latinos/as/xs
  - Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders
  - Native and Indigenous Americans
  - LGBTQIA+
  - Older adults (ages 60+)
  - Transition age youth (ages 16-25)
  - Family/caregivers of persons served by Tri-City
  - Law Enforcement and first responders



- School officials and child services
  - People experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of homelessness
  - People with substance use disorders
  - People with disabilities
- Focus groups will provide feedback on awareness of Tri-City's current work, participants level of comfort/awareness with mental health as a topic, best ways to reach target populations with information/resources, areas of concern or need for improvement.
  - Focus groups and outreach will also give Tri-City a better understanding of the issues faced by persons with Substance use disorders as well as people experiencing homelessness. This will allow Tri-City to understand the type of programming or housing resources/supports will be most helpful to individuals with SUD or unhoused individuals in our three cities.
  - Contract with a marketing/communication firm to work with participants on creating effective outreach materials and social media posts, in addition to researching and writing project proposals based off ideas garnered from focus groups and stakeholders.
  - Assess the learning goals annually and apply lessons learned to each new Innovation project idea that is under consideration as well as MHSa Three-Year plans and Annual Updates.
  - Post the results for each Innovation project component on Tri-City's Innovation page located on our website. This information will include a dashboard for current and newly proposed projects that track:
    - Dates and locations for Innovation stakeholder meetings and workgroups
    - Number and description of project proposals submitted
    - Number and description of survey ideas received
    - Marketing efforts and results
    - Number and demographics of stakeholder meetings and workgroup attendees
  - Financial summary for Innovation plans and proposed projects



## Learning Questions

1. Will peer led focus groups result in an increase in peer participation and continued involvement in the community planning process?
2. Will the return to in-person and face-to-face meetings with stakeholders and community members result in a deeper understanding of the needs of the community we serve?
3. Will a focus marketing approach targeting specific populations and age groups result in an increase in attendance and participation in the community planning process?
4. Will providing UpToDate information on a website page about the Innovation community planning process and the results of community outreach and engagement strengthen the knowledge of participants who are seeking to learn more about Innovation and the process for creating unique projects that are relevant to their community?

## Budget Narrative

Tri-City Mental Health Authority (TCMHA) has allocated \$675,000 in Innovation funds for the following project: Community Planning Process for Innovation Project(s). This three-year project is expected to commence in FY 2023-24, pending approval from the MHSOAC, and conclude in FY 2025-26.

**Direct salaries are estimated to be \$125,000 annually over three years and include the following positions:**

### Program Coordinator

33% of Innovation Coordinator salary to oversee the implementation of the project including the planning, organizing, training, and directing of activities as they relate to this project. Innovation staff time includes researching concepts, developing materials, coordinating and/or facilitating meetings, drafting proposals, etc.

### Peer (FTE)

Individual with lived experience, fluent in Spanish (preferably), and able to build trusting relationships with unserved and underserved community members who may be experiencing barriers due to culture or stigma. Facilitate focus groups that will provide feedback on awareness of Tri-City's current work, participants level of comfort/awareness with mental health as a topic, best ways to reach target



populations with information/resources, gaps in services and areas of concern or need for improvement.

Peer Consultant

Cost is estimated to be \$120,000 over three years. Peer support contracted through provider whose peer staff are subject matter experts specializing in providing population-center training, programming, focus groups and advocacy.

Marketing

Estimated cost is \$120,000 over three years. Marketing firm to work on researching and writing plan based off ideas garnered from focus groups and stakeholders. Incorporate Human-Centered Design, a creative approach to problem solving that is people-centered, where Tri-City staff and stakeholders work together to design and direct marketing efforts based on mutual needs and goals.

Stipends/Meals

Estimated cost to be \$30,000 over three years. Financial incentives provided to focus group participants to encourage their attendance and contribution to the community planning process. Meals and/or snacks for each event to encourage longer conversations.

Supplies/Transportation Vouchers

Estimated cost \$30,000 over three years. Presentation/discussion materials including printing cost. Vouchers for transportation for stakeholders, consumers, and family members to attend in person meetings

Description	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
Direct Salaries	\$125,000	\$125,000	\$125,000	\$375,000
Peer Consultant	\$40,000	\$40,000	\$40,000	\$120,000
Marketing	\$40,000	\$40,000	\$40,000	\$120,000
Stipends/Meals	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$30,000
Supplies/Transportation Vehicles	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$30,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$225,000</b>	<b>\$225,000</b>	<b>\$225,000</b>	<b>\$675,000</b>



## Outcomes

By expanding our community planning process, we can better serve our diverse community members. We will also be able to track and report our efforts over the course of the two years to show transparency and most of all, transformation. Tri-City will be able to better report on our community planning process by showcasing the types of advertising utilized, number of community members who participated in the planning process, number of focus groups and outreach events attended and how these efforts support new Innovation plan development.

## Stakeholder Process

During FY 2022-23, five virtual Innovation workgroups were held where this plan was developed. A draft of this proposal was posted on August 11, 2023, for a 30-day review process which ended on September 12, 2023. Staff circulated a draft of the Innovation Plan by posting a copy of the plan on TCMH's website as well as promoting the posting on social media. Copies of the plan were also placed at local city halls, community centers and libraries. Comments were welcomed via email, fax or phone. There were no written comments received during this comment period. On September 12, 2023, this project proposal was presented to the Mental Health Commission where public comments included a request to expand the target audience to include additional populations: Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, Native and Indigenous Americans, people with disabilities, and caregivers. These modifications are included in this updated plan. Following the public hearing, the Mental Health Commission voted unanimously to endorse and recommend this plan to the Tri-City Governing Board for approval and adoption. On September 20, 2023, the Tri-City Governing Board met and unanimously approved and adopted the Innovation plan, *Community Planning Process for Innovation Project(s)*. The MHSOAC approved this project on October 26, 2023.