

RFS 25-80876
Regional Recovery Hubs
Attachment D - Technical Proposal

RESPONDENT NAME:

Connection Café

REGION RESPONDENT PROPOSES TO SERVE:

Region 8

SOW Section 1-3 - Overview of Project

- a. Provide a high-level summary of how you will execute the responsibilities of a Regional Recovery Hub. Please explain how your experience positions you as the ideal choice for maintaining peer support services as a Hub.

The Connection Café is exceptionally equipped to serve as the Regional Recovery Hub for Region 8 based on our extensive experience, subject matter expertise, and proven track record in harm reduction and peer recovery support. Since its inception in 2020 through a community-academic partnership with the Indiana University School of Public Health, the Connection Café has thoughtfully developed and implemented a public health model of integrated harm reduction, recovery, and community connection. This approach prioritizes low-barrier service provision, lived experience among leadership and staff, person-centered orientation, leveraging existing community resources, and serving the whole community through a brick-and-mortar site, street outreach, and remote/virtual services.

Since beginning services in 2020, the Connection Café has significantly expanded in size and scope; we have grown by developing our peer recovery workforce and effectively managing high-quality, evidence-based direct services and supports. We began with one part-time certified peer providing harm reduction services, then expanded to integrate comprehensive recovery services and opened as a full-fledged, brick-and-mortar Recovery Community Organization (RCO) in 2021, serving as a hub for five counties. Subsequently, we extended services to two additional counties such that we now serve 7 counties. We have also grown substantially in the services we provide to community members (e.g., mutual aid support groups; job skills training; pro-social activities; fentanyl and xylazine test strips; peer recovery support; Naloxone access; safe sex supplies; shower, washer, dryer; hygiene kits; syringe access and disposal; 24-hour harm reduction vending machine; transportation to treatment; wound care kits; clothing; computer, printer, internet use). This tremendous growth, and subsequent impact, has been possible due to the effective management and leadership of the Café. Our first part-time certified peer, Charmin Gabbard, is the Executive Director and has grown the Café to a staff of 14 certified peers serving 7 counties. This successful expansion, and our

subsequent RCO certification in February 2023, demonstrate our capacity to scale and adapt our services to effectively meet the needs of community members in our region. As one of Indiana's eight full-service harm reduction programs and one of the sixteen street outreach programs, our operational experience and service capacity are well-aligned with the demands of a Regional Recovery Hub.

Connection Café's extensive experience, subject matter expertise, comprehensive service delivery, and strong leadership and collaborative network make us the ideal candidate for maintaining peer support services as a Regional Recovery Hub. Our proven ability to scale services, train, certify and support peers, and foster effective partnerships positions us uniquely to provide exceptional services and drive positive outcomes for Region 8.

SOW Section 4 and 5 – Desired Contractor Experience, Region and Mandatory Minimum Requirements

- a. For your region, describe any experience managing the direct delivery of peer recovery services, including experience as an active Recovery Community Organization (RCO). Highlight any subject matter expertise you have, especially in mental health, substance use recovery, and recovery-oriented systems of care.

Connection Café's expertise in mental health, substance use recovery, harm reduction, and recovery-oriented systems of care is foundational to our service delivery model. Since our establishment in collaboration with IU School of Public Health, we have applied a public health approach that integrates harm reduction, recovery support, and community connection. Our services span street outreach, jail support, harm reduction, and both one-on-one and group peer recovery support. With a current staff of 14 trained and certified peer recovery coaches, we leverage our collective lived experience and professional training to provide effective, person-centered, empathetic support to individuals across the spectrum of substance use and recovery. We are thoughtful in our approach of supporting Our current experience operating as a Hub has provided extensive experience in effectively delivering, managing, and supervising the direct delivery of peer support services. This has included overseeing compliance of peer services with relevant state standards.

Our model is unique in that it is the only certified RCO in Indiana to combine full harm reduction and recovery services within the same organization. This integration allows us to serve individuals regardless of their current stage in the recovery process—whether they are actively using substances, in treatment, or in recovery. Our holistic, low-barrier approach addresses various needs related to home, health, community, and purpose, empowering individuals through a comprehensive recovery support system.

- b. Describe any experience developing and maintaining relationships with non-profit organizations, including coordinating linkages to care for individuals across different systems. Please explain how you will leverage current relationships to ensure individuals

receive the necessary services. Please identify how this work will be done for your proposed region.

Connection Café has developed extensive experience in stakeholder engagement through strategic partnerships and collaborations. Our ongoing partnership with IU School of Public Health ensures that our services are delivered with a culturally competent, public health-oriented approach. Additionally, we engage with a broad range of local, regional, and state-level stakeholders, including healthcare providers, treatment providers, law enforcement, schools, community organizations and non-profits, first-responders, and faith-based entities. We excel at both county-specific collaborations (e.g., Fayette County IRACS program) and across-system partnerships (e.g., judge, OTP, certified peers collaborate to ensure individuals are assessed and initiated into treatment within 24 hours of release) We could not effectively do the work we do without relying on collaborations and relationships to facilitate active linkages to help those we get to serve access necessary services across various systems and domains. Café leadership excels in developing, maintaining, and utilizing relationships with diverse entities to provide the best services possible and to expand and offer services to our current 7-county catchment area. We do this in diverse ways, but mostly by being immersed in the communities we serve. For example, while the Café is an independent, non-profit RCO, we recognize that many recovery organizations operate within or as part of their local drug coalitions. Thus, attending and presenting at those meetings is a meaningful approach to develop relationships that can extend services for individuals in need. We will leverage the same skills and approaches we have been using for years as a current hub to build on and further develop new fruitful relationships in the additional 5 counties that are part of Region 8. As part of this Regional Recovery Hub opportunity, we are proposing an additional leadership position, an associate director, for the Connection Café to help with this important stakeholder engagement work.

- c. Describe any experience collecting and reporting data on peer recovery activities, outcomes, and impact. Briefly explain your experience operating and reporting data in RecoveryLink.

Connection Café has robust systems in place for data collection and reporting, crucial for monitoring and improving our services. Since our inception, we have utilized various data platforms to track and report our performance. For the past two years, we have used Recovery Link and previously the Recovery Data Platform with Faces and Voices. We also report data to the Indiana Department of Health's harm reduction database, reflecting our commitment to accurate and comprehensive data management.

Our staff is well-versed in handling both identifiable and unidentifiable data, with training in HIPAA and 42 CFR regulations ensuring compliance with federal confidentiality standards for substance use data. Through our partnership with IU School of Public Health, most of our staff are also trained in CITI and have contributed to survey data collection and interpretation of findings. Additionally, we have experience reporting

federal data through previous HRSA grants, demonstrating our capability to manage and report on complex data requirements effectively.

In summary, Connection Café's subject matter expertise in recovery support, extensive stakeholder engagement, and proficient data collection and reporting practices position us as a leading candidate for managing peer recovery services in Region 8. Our comprehensive approach and proven track record highlight our ability to deliver high-quality, integrated recovery support while maintaining rigorous data management standards.

SOW Section 6 – Peer Services and Supervision

- a. Please provide an estimate for the total annual amount of funds required to complete the duties listed in Section 6 of the SOW. This total should include the amount you would need from the State as well as the amount you might obtain through other sources. This estimate should exclude any administrative or costs required to maintain certified peers.

The State may utilize the estimates supplied to determine the resources needed for each region in the State. The ultimate amount for these services in each Hub's contract will be determined during contract negotiations.

1) Estimate:

Our estimated total annual amount of funds required to complete the duties listed in Section 6 of the SOW is \$1,637,376.00. This estimate is based on our having 20 full-time certified peers (estimated at \$23/hour X 40 hours/week X 52 weeks/year with 31.20 in fringe benefits) and 5 full-time certified supervisors (estimated at \$28/hour X 40 hours/week X 52 weeks/year with 31.20 fringe benefits) for Region 8.

2) Funds from Other Sources that we Might Obtain:

Currently Under Review: HRSA RCORP-Impact Grant (if funded, September 1, 2024 – August 31, 2028 for \$1,862,362 to become an OTP and provide MAT and peer services to 5 counties).

- b. Please indicate if your organization is currently receiving any alternate funding source(s) to provide peer recovery services and the annual amount received. Please describe how you anticipate utilizing alternate funding source(s) to complement funds awarded through this RFS.

Connection Café currently receives several sources of alternate funding to support our peer recovery services, each designated for specific programs and regions. These funds play a crucial role in our comprehensive service delivery model and will be strategically utilized to complement and enhance the effectiveness of any additional funds awarded through this Regional Recovery Hubs opportunity.

1. Indiana Forensics Services (IFS) Contract: We have a contract with Mental Health America of Indiana (MHA) for Indiana Forensics Services (IFS), amounting to \$357,454 for the period from July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025. This funding is specifically allocated to support five certified peer recovery specialists working within the Fayette County jail. These funds are designated for jail-based recovery services and will not overlap with the broader community-based services proposed under this RFS. This contract allows us to provide targeted support for individuals within the correctional system, thus complementing the broader recovery efforts funded through this opportunity.

2. Indiana Recovery Network (IRN) Contract: We are currently receiving \$44,995.98 from the Indiana Recovery Network (IRN) grant, which will end on December 31, 2024. This grant supports peer recovery services across seven counties, overlapping with the proposed Region 8 hub area. However, these funds are scheduled to end prior to the start of this RFS.

3. Connect to Cure Program: Our Connect to Cure program, funded by the CDC, provides \$105,851 for HIV and Hepatitis C testing and linkage to care, running from April 1, 2023, to February 28, 2025. This program covers nine counties, including seven that overlap with the proposed RFS project area. The overlap is limited to a two-month period. The Connect to Cure funds are utilized specifically for testing and care linkage, and these activities will be coordinated with the broader peer recovery support services funded through this opportunity to avoid duplication and ensure a comprehensive approach to health and recovery support.

4. Harm Reduction Street Outreach Grant: We have received funding of \$163,005 for Harm Reduction Street Outreach, which covers the period from July 2023 to June 30, 2025. This funding is dedicated to harm reduction services via street outreach across seven counties, all of which are included in the proposed project region. This grant enables us to address harm reduction needs and outreach services, which will complement the peer recovery support services if funded through this opportunity. The integration of these services ensures a holistic approach to recovery and harm reduction within the community and extends our reach.

Utilization of Funds: The funds from these alternate sources will be strategically integrated with any funds awarded through the RFS to enhance our overall service delivery. Specifically:

- **IFS Contract** will focus on jail-based peer recovery support, complementing community-based services funded by the RFS.
- **IRN Grant** will end bring to funds from this opportunity being allocated.
- **Connect to Cure** will provide critical health services that intersect with recovery support, and our approach ensures these services are aligned with and integrated into our peer recovery support services.
- **Harm Reduction Street Outreach** extends the modality in which we are able to reach individuals in need of harm reduction, peer recovery support, and access to a comprehensive network or referral services and supports.

By leveraging these funding sources, Connection Café will enhance the breadth and effectiveness of our peer recovery services, ensuring a well-rounded and integrated approach to supporting individuals in recovery across the region.

- c. Please complete the following table and provide your best estimate for the monthly average / amount of certified peers needed for your selected region. This includes: the estimated number of full-time and part-time certified peers needed to provide adequate peer support service for your region, and the average wages you propose to pay them (including benefits if applicable).

Position	Number of Proposed Monthly Part-Time Employees (PTEs)	Number of Proposed Monthly Full-Time Employees (FTEs)	Average Hourly Pay (including benefits if applicable)
Certified Peer(s)	0	20	\$20 - \$25.50 plus 31.20% benefits
Peer Supervisor(s)	0	5	\$26 – \$30 plus 31.20% benefits

- d. Please explain your experience with peer services. Please explain how your experience informed your above estimates.

Connection Café's extensive experience with peer services has been central to our ability to effectively design and estimate the necessary resources for expanding our operations to serve 11 counties as the proposed Region 8 Hub. Our experience is grounded in a robust track record of developing and overseeing peer recovery and harm reduction services, driven by the leadership of our Executive Director, Charmin Gabbard, and a dedicated team of certified peers with lived experience.

Growth and Development of Peer Services: Connection Café began with one part-time certified peer, the Café Director, Charmin Gabbard, serving Fayette County. Under her leadership, we have expanded significantly to a staff of 14 certified peers operating across seven counties. This growth reflects our ability to adapt and scale our services in response to community needs. Ms. Gabbard's decade-long experience in harm reduction and peer support has been instrumental in shaping our approach and ensuring that our low-barrier services are effectively aligned with the needs of the communities we serve.

Comprehensive Service Delivery: Our service offerings have been thoughtfully developed based on leadership expertise, community needs, and best practices in the field. The Connection Café provides a wide range of peer support services which include:

- **One-on-One Recovery Support:** Person-centered/tailored to individual needs
- **Mutual Aid Support Groups:** Offering diverse group options such as all pathways to recovery from substances and mental health, grief and loss, AA/NA, and gender-specific groups (e.g., female-identified, male-identified).
- **Syringe Access/Disposal:** Harm reduction services are integrated with recovery support services at the Café and through activities in the community

- **Naloxone Access:** Providing trainings and multiple means of access through strategically located Naloxboxes, Street Outreach, and at the Café
- **Active Referrals:** Through our extensive network of providers and community services we are able to make warm hand-off referrals and follow-up
- **Fentanyl and Xylazine Test Strips:** Offered as part of our harm reduction services with education to reduce overdose
- **Advocacy and Community Awareness:** Engaging in events such as the Summer of Recovery Concert, International Overdose Awareness Day, and Recovery Month to raise awareness, support recovery, and reduce stigma.
- **Life Skills Development:** Providing opportunities for financial literacy, skills training, resume building, public speaking, etc.
- **Safer Sex Supplies:** We offer condoms, lubricants and other safer sex supplies to reduce STIs and unintended pregnancy
- **Legal Aid and Support:** Organizing expungement events and other legal assistance.
- **Pro-Social Activities:** Hosting community-building events such as kayaking, bonfires, and weekly Café Friday and Saturday social nights to foster connection and support.
- **Infectious Disease Testing and Linkages to Care:** Offering HIV and Hepatitis C testing, with connections to necessary care services.
- **Multi-Level Advocacy:** Participating in state and national events, policy reform, and legislative testimony.
- **Daily Living Support:** Showers, washer and dryer, food/beverages, hygiene kits, and clothing and materials goods are available to those we serve.

Experience-Driven Estimates: Our estimates for the proposed Region 8 Hub, including 20 full-time certified peers and 5 peer supervisors, are informed by our experience managing and scaling operations in our current seven-county area. This growth trajectory has provided valuable insights into the resources required to effectively support an expanded service area. The proposed staff structure reflects the scale and complexity of managing services across 11 counties, ensuring adequate coverage and supervision.

The inclusion of hourly pay with benefits for all employees is designed to foster a fair workplace and support workforce development. This approach is informed by our commitment to employee well-being and professional growth, which is essential for maintaining high-quality peer support services.

In summary, Connection Café's extensive experience in peer service provision, driven by Charmin Gabbard's leadership and our proven track record, has directly informed our estimates for the Region 8 Hub. Our approach is grounded in a comprehensive understanding of community needs and service delivery, ensuring that our estimates are both realistic and aligned with our capacity to expand effectively.

- e. Describe how the peer supervisor(s) will oversee the certified peer(s) employed by the Hub. Please refer to Section 6.a.iii of the Scope of Work (Attachment A) for more details on peer supervision duties.

Connection Café is committed to providing robust and effective supervision for our certified peers, ensuring adherence to state standards and certified RCO policies. Our current supervision structure, which we will continue to implement if this proposal is funded, is designed to offer comprehensive support and maintain high standards of peer recovery services.

Supervision Structure:

- **Weekly Supervision:** Each certified peer will receive at least one hour of one-on-one supervision per week. This is in line with state standards and RCO policies, ensuring that all certified peers have dedicated time to discuss their cases, address challenges, and receive guidance and support.
- **Certified Peer Supervisors:** Certified peer supervisors will each be responsible for different counties and overseeing up to four certified peers. This manageable ratio allows for focused and individualized support, ensuring that each certified peer receives the attention and mentorship they need to perform their duties effectively.

Multi-Level Support System:

- **Direct and Organizational Support:** In addition to their direct supervisor, certified peers will have access to a comprehensive organizational support system. This includes the Associate Director (new position with this RFS) and the Executive Director, as outlined in our organizational flow chart. This multi-level support ensures that certified peers can seek additional guidance and resources beyond their immediate supervisor, fostering a well-rounded support network.
- **Peer Supervisor Duties:** According to Section 6.a.iii of the Scope of Work, the contractor is required to ensure that certified peers are supervised by certified peer supervisors, including one-on-one supervision. Our structure aligns with this requirement by providing regular, individualized supervision sessions and ensuring that each certified peer is closely monitored and supported.

Supervision Practices:

- **One-on-One Supervision:** Certified peer supervisors will conduct weekly one-on-one supervision sessions with their assigned certified peers. These sessions will focus on reviewing case management, discussing any challenges or concerns, celebrating successes, and providing professional development and support. This regular interaction is crucial for maintaining high standards of care and addressing issues promptly.
- **Support and Development:** Supervisors will also be involved in the ongoing professional development of their certified peers. This includes providing training opportunities, supporting certification renewal, and addressing any skill gaps. Supervisors will work closely with certified peers to ensure they are equipped with the necessary tools and knowledge to perform their roles effectively.

- **Feedback and Evaluation:** Regular feedback and performance evaluations will be conducted to assess the effectiveness of the peer support services and identify areas for improvement. These evaluations will be used to refine supervision practices and ensure that all certified peers are meeting the expected standards of service delivery.

Connection Café's peer supervision structure is designed to provide effective oversight and support for certified peers, aligning with state standards and RCO policies. By ensuring each certified peer receives dedicated weekly supervision, access to multiple levels of organizational support, and ongoing professional development, we are committed to maintaining high-quality peer recovery services and supporting the success of our certified peers.

- f. Please describe how you will ensure ethical services are provided and staff understands the peer support professional code of ethics and its implications.

At the Connection Café, maintaining the highest ethical standards in service delivery is a fundamental priority. We have established comprehensive measures to ensure that all services are provided ethically and that our staff is fully aware of and adheres to the professional code of ethics governing peer support.

All certified peers at Connection Café are required to complete 16 hours of initial ethical training as part of their credentialing process. This foundational training covers the professional code of ethics in detail, ensuring that our staff understands the ethical responsibilities and best practices associated with their role. Additionally, peers must complete 6 hours of continuing education units every two years to maintain their certification and stay current with ethical standards.

The professional code of ethics is regularly reinforced during supervision sessions, team-building activities, and ongoing staff support. Our Executive Director, Charmin Gabbard, who serves on the board of ethics overseeing peer recovery support credentialing through ICAADA, ensures that ethical practices are continually emphasized and integrated into daily operations.

Connection Café has established a clear and accessible reporting mechanism for confidentially reporting any suspected ethical breaches or concerns. Staff are trained to recognize and report potential ethical issues promptly, ensuring that any concerns are addressed swiftly and appropriately. In the event of an identified ethical breach, Connection Café will notify the State within 24 hours in formal writing. This notification will include:

- The name and certification/training of the individual involved
- The date of the incident identifying the ethical breach
- The date of the report to the certification agency
- A brief description of the incident and the actions taken

We will also notify the relevant peer certification agency per their ethics reporting standards within 24 hours of the incident. During the investigation process, identified peers or peer supervisors will be temporarily suspended from providing support services until the ethics investigation is complete.

Our leadership team, particularly Charmin Gabbard, has extensive experience in upholding ethical standards in service provision. With Charmin's role on the ICAADA board of ethics, we benefit from high-level insight into ethical practices and standards, reinforcing our commitment to ethical service delivery.

Connection Café leadership is well-versed in intervening effectively when potential ethical situations arise. We have a proven track record of managing ethical concerns with integrity and transparency, ensuring that all actions taken align with both our organizational values and professional ethical standards. Connection Café is dedicated to providing ethical services through rigorous training, ongoing reinforcement of ethical standards, and robust reporting mechanisms. Our established procedures for handling ethical breaches and our leadership's extensive experience in maintaining high ethical standards ensure that our services remain of the highest quality. By adhering to these practices, we uphold the integrity of our peer support services and contribute to a professional and supportive environment for both our staff and the individuals we serve.

SOW Section 7 – Peer Workforce Development

- a. Describe the peer supervision and support system you will establish for certified peer(s). This should include but is not limited to, the frequency of regular one-on-one supervision sessions, the content of supervision sessions, and additional support services for staff.

At Connection Café, we prioritize the development and well-being of our peer workforce, recognizing that effective supervision and support are essential for maintaining high standards of service delivery and combatting compassion fatigue. Our peer supervision and support system is designed to ensure that all certified peers are well-prepared, supported, and continuously improving in their roles. If funded as the Region 8 Hub, the following will be implemented (some of which is described in Section 6e above):

Professional Development and Certification

- **Development Plan for New Peers:** For prospective certified peers who do not yet hold certification, Connection Café provides a comprehensive professional peer development plan. This plan includes required training and certification within 90 days of starting their position. We ensure that all individuals are fully certified before they provide peer services. Proof of training completion and certification will be readily available and provided to the State within three business days upon request.

- **Ongoing Training:** Certified peers have access to ongoing training opportunities to stay updated with best practices and emerging trends in peer support services. This includes participation in relevant conferences, workshops, and professional development activities, all provided at no cost to the staff.

Peer Supervision and Support

- **Regular One-on-One Supervision:** Each certified peer will receive at least one hour of one-on-one supervision per week. These sessions cover a range of topics, including:
 - **Practices, Policies, and Procedures:** Ensuring that all peers are familiar with and adhere to organizational and field standards.
 - **Self-Care:** Encouraging strategies to manage stress and avoid burnout.
 - **Relational Dynamics:** Addressing any challenges or issues in their interactions with individuals and families we serve, as well as colleagues.
- **Certified Peer Supervisors:** Certified peer supervisors will oversee a manageable group of up to four peers in a management service catchment area, providing individualized attention and support. Supervisors are responsible for maintaining high standards and addressing any concerns that arise.
- **Support Services and Team Building:** Connection Café utilizes Mezzo Solutions for team-building, staff training, and professionalism workshops. Additionally, we offer paid mental health days, sick time, and vacation time to support staff well-being. Our team participates in retreats four times a year to promote self-care, team-building, and to minimize burnout and compassion fatigue.

Performance Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

- **Structured Performance Reviews:** All staff undergo annual performance reviews, which include self-assessment, written feedback, and verbal discussions. Performance metrics and outcomes are documented in Recovery Link and are used to guide professional development.
- **Feedback and Continuous Improvement:** Regular feedback is gathered from both peers receiving services and supervising staff to ensure high-quality service delivery. Any concerns or performance issues are addressed promptly, and additional support is provided as needed.

Handling Ethical Concerns and Setbacks

- **Ethical Breach Reporting:** If any ethical concerns or breaches are identified, we follow a clear protocol for reporting and addressing these issues. Peers involved in ethical breaches will be suspended from service until an investigation is completed.
- **Support for Setbacks:** In cases where a peer experiences a setback related to substances or mental health, we provide a supportive approach that allows for a temporary break in employment rather than immediate termination, provided

there are no ethical issues. This approach supports staff in regaining stability and readiness to return to their roles.

In summary, Connection Café's peer workforce development system is designed to provide comprehensive support, ensure adherence to professional standards, and promote continuous growth. Our structured supervision, ongoing training, and supportive environment are integral to maintaining a high-performing and ethical peer workforce.

SOW Section 8 – Additional Programming Support

- a. Describe any existing relationships with Opioid Treatment Programs (OTPs) and medication providers in the proposed region, including challenges and opportunities to continue developing relationships. If not applicable, please explain how you will establish these relationships.

At the Connection Café, we are committed to expanding and strengthening our relationships with Opioid Treatment Programs (OTPs) and medication providers in the proposed Region 8. Our existing partnerships and strategic plans position us well to enhance our service delivery and address the challenges and opportunities within the region.

Existing Relationships

- **Established Partnerships:** Connection Café has developed robust relationships with several key OTPs and medication providers in the region. Our current partners include Reid Health, Centerstone, Meridian, Groups Recovery, Richmond Opioid Treatment Program, Well Care, and Neighborhood Health. These collaborations have been instrumental in facilitating access to treatment and support services for individuals in need.
- **Successful Collaborations:** We have effectively leveraged these relationships to provide comprehensive support through both brick-and-mortar locations and street outreach. This includes coordinating transportation and referrals to treatment, ensuring that individuals can access the necessary services without barriers.

Challenges and Opportunities

- **Challenges:**
 - **Stigma Surrounding Treatment:** One significant challenge is the stigma associated with opioid treatment and medication-assisted treatment (MAT). This stigma can impact individuals' willingness to seek help and engage in treatment programs.
 - **Integration of Services:** As we continue to expand our services, integrating our peer support and harm reduction efforts with OTPs can be complex and requires careful coordination.
- **Opportunities:**

- **Education and Advocacy:** We are actively engaged in educational and advocacy efforts to combat stigma and promote the benefits of MAT. By continuing these efforts, we aim to increase community acceptance and support for treatment programs.
- **Expansion of Services:** We have a pending federal grant application with HRSA, which, if funded, will support Connection Café in becoming an OTP. This expansion would enable us to offer medication-assisted treatment directly through our services, further integrating our support with MAT options such as Vivitrol, Suboxone, and Sublocade.

Development and Coordination Plans

- **Strengthening Relationships:** We will continue to build upon our existing relationships with OTPs and medication providers by enhancing collaboration and communication. Regular meetings and joint initiatives will be established to align our services and ensure seamless integration of care.
- **Multi-Sector Collaboration:** We have successfully developed a multi-sector collaboration involving OTPs, criminal justice agencies, and Connection Café. For example, we have coordinated with the Fayette County judge to ensure that individuals are assessed and initiated into OTP treatment within 24 hours of release. This collaborative approach enhances our ability to provide timely and effective support.
- **Expansion through RCO and Mobile Outreach:** If awarded the grant to become an OTP, we will expand our services through our Recovery Community Organization (RCO) and mobile outreach efforts. This will allow us to reach more individuals through integrated support across the region.

- b. Describe any existing relationships with local jails and Integrated Reentry and Correctional Support (IRACS) programs in the proposed region including challenges and opportunities to continue developing relationships. If not applicable, please explain how you will establish these relationships.

Connection Café has developed significant relationships with local jails and Integrated Reentry and Correctional Support (IRACS) programs in the proposed Region 8, demonstrating our commitment to effective reentry and support for individuals transitioning from incarceration.

Existing Relationships with IRACS Programs

- **Fayette County:** We are entering our second year of collaboration with the IRACS program in Fayette County. Our partnership has been marked by close coordination with IRACS leadership, which has enabled us to tailor our programming to meet the specific needs of individuals in the local jail. This relationship has fostered effective integration of peer support services and has

enhanced our ability to address the unique challenges faced by those transitioning out of incarceration.

- **Delaware and Blackford Counties:** We have established initial connections with the IRACS programs in Delaware and Blackford Counties. Our engagement has involved early discussions about potential collaborations and understanding the local needs and structures. We are committed to deepening these relationships and exploring opportunities to expand our support services in these areas.

Challenges and Opportunities

- **Challenges:**
 - **Processes and Procedures:** Navigating the processes and procedures associated with IRACS programs and local jails has presented challenges. We have invested time in understanding and adapting to these requirements, learning valuable lessons that will inform our approach in other counties.
 - **Variability in Local Systems:** Each county may have different operational structures and needs, requiring tailored approaches to effectively implement IRACS-related support services.
- **Opportunities:**
 - **Lessons Learned:** Our experience with the IRACS program in Fayette County has provided us with insights and best practices that we will apply as we expand our efforts and our support to other counties. These lessons include refining our engagement strategies and optimizing the delivery of peer support services within correctional settings.
 - **Interest from Other Counties:** Our street outreach efforts in Union, Wayne, and Henry Counties have led to positive relationships with local law enforcement and generated interest in learning more about IRACS. We view this interest as an opportunity to promote educational and exploratory sessions for these counties, facilitating the potential implementation of jail-based recovery support services.
 - **Promoting Positive Jail Programming:** If funded, we will actively promote learning opportunities for all counties within Region 8 to explore the benefits and implementation of IRACS-based recovery support services. We will leverage our strong relationships with local law enforcement and existing IRACS programs to facilitate introductions and build rapport with additional jails. By showcasing the success of our current programs and the positive outcomes achieved, we aim to inspire and engage other counties to adopt similar initiatives. Recognizing the variability in local systems, we will customize our approach to each county, addressing specific needs and operational contexts. This tailored approach will ensure that our services are relevant and effectively integrated within each local jail's framework.

Thus, Connection Café is well-positioned to continue developing and strengthening our relationships with local jails and IRACS programs in Region 8. Our existing

collaborations, combined with our proactive strategies for expanding these relationships, will enable us to provide comprehensive and effective support for individuals transitioning from incarceration to the community.

- c. Describe how you will establish and/or maintain relationships with the Indiana Department of Corrections (IDOC), trauma informed recovery-oriented systems of care initiatives, local syringe service programs, harm reduction organizations, recovery community organizations, and other recovery services in the proposed region.

At the Connection Café, we have a robust track record of establishing and maintaining strong relationships with a range of key entities, including the Indiana Department of Corrections (IDOC), trauma-informed recovery-oriented systems of care initiatives, local syringe service programs, harm reduction organizations, recovery community organizations, and other recovery services in the proposed region. Our approach is built on our established reputation as regional experts and our proactive engagement strategies.

Indiana Department of Corrections (IDOC): We provide annual advocacy work at one of the three women's state prisons in Indiana, where we offer critical insights and support related to harm reduction and recovery services. Our Director, Charmin Gabbard, is actively involved in presenting monthly at the IDOC Training Center in New Castle. These presentations focus on criminal justice and mental health, ensuring that newly hired prison staff receive up-to-date and practical information about these critical areas. Through our work with the IDOC, we have built a strong network with key correctional facilities and staff. This network facilitates ongoing dialogue and collaboration, enabling us to address emerging needs and enhance service delivery for individuals transitioning from incarceration.

Trauma-Informed Recovery-Oriented Systems of Care Initiatives: Our Director, Associate Director (to be hired), and Peer Supervisors are/will be committed to participating in local Coordinating Council meetings and trauma-informed recovery-oriented systems of care initiatives. This involvement ensures that we remain at the forefront of best practices and emerging trends in trauma-informed care. We leverage these platforms to promote our services and foster connections with other providers and stakeholders. Our engagement extends to local, regional, and state levels, utilizing social media and other communication channels to share information and opportunities for collaboration.

Local Syringe Service Programs and Harm Reduction Organizations: We have developed strong partnerships with local syringe service programs and harm reduction organizations. Connection Café is listed on national websites as a recognized harm reduction provider, underscoring our credibility and commitment to this essential aspect of public health. We work closely with a national harm reduction technical assistance provider, which enhances our ability to stay informed about best practices and provide high-quality harm reduction services. This collaboration also supports our efforts in advocating for harm reduction at the local level.

Recovery Community Organizations (RCOs) and Other Recovery Services: Connection Café is a leading recovery community organization in the region, frequently consulted for expertise

on RCO-related matters. Our active involvement in Systems of Care networks further establishes our role as a key player in the recovery services landscape. We lead a diverse consortium of providers, including substance use disorder (SUD) treatment centers, mental health services, schools, and other community organizations. This consortium enables us to provide comprehensive, coordinated care and support for individuals in recovery. Additionally, we attend quarterly meetings with the State Department of Health to stay updated on public health initiatives and contribute to discussions on improving service delivery and health outcomes. Finally, our staff participates in monthly harm reduction street outreach trainings, ensuring that we are equipped with the latest knowledge and skills to effectively support individuals in our region.

- d. Describe how you will support all pathways to recovery for individuals that are seeking support.

Our steadfast commitment to supporting all pathways to recovery is central to our Connection Café mission and service delivery model. We embrace a person-centered, self-driven approach that respects and celebrates the diverse journeys of individuals seeking support and ensures that every pathway to recovery is supported. We provide person-centered and self-driven services. We meet individuals where they are in their journey of change, guided by the stages of change/transtheoretical model (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983). This approach recognizes that each person is at a different stage of readiness and requires tailored support. Our services are designed to be flexible and responsive, adapting to the unique needs and preferences of each individual. Our certified peers work closely with individuals to assess their needs, provide support, and refer them to the appropriate level of care for both substance use and mental health treatment. We ensure that our referrals are aligned with the person's stage of change and their specific recovery goals.

We celebrate and respect all pathways to recovery, understanding that there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Our approach is grounded in the belief that individuals should have the freedom to choose the path that best serves their needs, whether it involves traditional treatment methods, harm reduction strategies, or a combination of approaches. Our certified peers are extensively trained and supervised to provide support across all pathways to recovery. This training includes an emphasis on respecting and facilitating diverse recovery methods, ensuring that our peers are equipped to support individuals in pursuing their chosen path without judgment or bias.

Connection Café utilizes a public health integrated approach that combines recovery, harm reduction, and community connectedness. This model ensures that we address the broader social determinants of health and provide a supportive environment that fosters recovery in all its forms. We actively engage with the community to build networks of support that complement individual recovery efforts. By promoting community connectedness, we help individuals build a supportive network that reinforces their chosen recovery path.

Connection Café is dedicated to supporting all pathways to recovery through a person-centered, self-driven approach. Our core values of empowerment and respect drive our interactions with individuals. We are committed to providing a non-judgmental space where people feel valued and supported in their unique recovery journeys. Our commitment to celebrating and respecting diverse recovery methods is embedded in our model of integrated recovery support, harm reduction, and community connectedness. By ensuring that our certified peers are well-trained and our services are adaptable, we provide comprehensive support that honors and facilitates each individual's unique path to recovery.

- e. Please describe how you will ensure the availability and distribution of harm reduction supplies such as Narcan and fentanyl testing strips to those in need.

Our commitment to harm reduction at the Connection Cafe is demonstrated through our extensive experience and established practices in the availability and distribution of critical supplies such as Narcan and fentanyl and xylazine testing strips. Since the inception of the Connection Café, we have been the sole supplier of Narcan in Fayette County, providing this life-saving medication to emergency services, law enforcement, the health department, and directly to the community. Our dedication to this mission has significantly contributed to reducing opioid overdose incidents in our area.

We have extended our Narcan distribution efforts beyond Fayette County to other counties within our region. Our proactive approach ensures that Narcan is available where it is most needed, supporting wider community safety and access. We have installed and regularly stock Naloxboxes in strategic locations throughout Fayette County, allowing for convenient and anonymous access to Narcan. This initiative will be expanded regionally, ensuring that Naloxboxes are placed in key locations across the entire Region 8 to maximize accessibility. Our innovative 24-hour harm reduction vending machine provides a range of essential supplies, including fentanyl testing strips. This machine is accessible at all times, further enhancing the availability of critical harm reduction resources. Additionally, we provide fentanyl and xylazine testing strips both on-site at the Connection Café and through our street outreach programs. This service helps individuals identify dangerous contaminants in their substances, promoting safer practices and reducing the risk of overdose.

We have established strong relationships with organizations important to the availability and distribution of harm reduction supplies. For example, partnerships with Ship Happens and the Indiana Department of Health facilitate effective coordination and support our distribution efforts by providing access to additional resources and expertise. As the Region 8 hub, we will leverage our existing network and relationships to ensure comprehensive distribution throughout the region. This includes coordinating with local partners and stakeholders to enhance the reach and impact of our harm reduction efforts.

We maintain a well-organized inventory management system to track the supply levels of Narcan and testing strips. This system ensures timely replenishment and prevents shortages, allowing us to consistently meet the needs of the community. In addition to

distributing supplies, we provide education on their proper use. Through community outreach and engagement efforts, we ensure that individuals are informed about how to use Narcan and testing strips effectively, and the importance of harm reduction practices.

We actively seek feedback from community members and partners to assess the effectiveness of our distribution efforts. This feedback helps us identify areas for improvement and adapt our strategies to better meet the needs of those we serve. We closely monitor our distribution activities and maintain detailed records to evaluate our impact. Regular reporting on our efforts allows us to track progress and demonstrate the effectiveness of our harm reduction initiatives.

The Connection Café is dedicated to ensuring the availability and distribution of harm reduction supplies such as Narcan and fentanyl testing strips through a combination of proven practices, innovative approaches, and strong partnerships. Our extensive experience and structured methods support our goal of providing these critical resources effectively across Region 8, enhancing community safety and promoting harm reduction.

- f. Please indicate whether you'd like to serve as a Contractor furnishing peer recovery services for Indiana's 2-1-1. If applicable, please describe how many certified peers you plan to utilize in servicing the 2-1-1 phone line. Please indicate what the hourly cost for this service would be.

Please note - an indication of interest to provide these services does not necessarily mean that the State will select you to provide these services. The number and identity of which Hubs will provide services to 2-1-1 shall be a negotiated element of the final contracts and a decision made at the State's discretion.

Please also note - a Respondent may decline to offer to furnish these services in this box without penalty. This is a separate element from a proposal's evaluation.

We do not intend to apply. We wish to decline to offer to furnish services for Indiana's 2-1-1.

SOW Section 9 – Referral Process

- a. Describe your proposed process for making a warm handoff to a formalized partner when a participant's needs cannot be fully met by your organization. Please highlight any relevant experiences with warm handoffs and coordinating referrals with partners.

At the Connection Café, our commitment to ensuring that participants receive the full spectrum of support they need is demonstrated through our well-established referral and warm handoff processes. Through our peer recovery support process, we begin by assessing a participant's needs and preferences. Based on the assessment, we develop a personalized service plan that outlines the participant's goals and the types of support needed. This plan guides the referral process and ensures that the participant's

preferences and requirements are central to our approach. The Connection Café has cultivated a robust network of diverse service providers, including those specializing in SUD treatment, mental health treatment, healthcare, and various social services. This network enables us to offer a range of options and ensure that participants are connected to the most appropriate and effective resources. We have established formalized partnerships with key organizations and agencies in our region. These partnerships are based on mutual agreements and collaboration, ensuring that we can provide seamless referrals and warm handoffs.

When we identify that a participant's needs extend beyond the services we provide, we initiate a warm handoff immediately. This involves not only referring the participant to the appropriate partner but also facilitating direct contact between the participant and the partner organization to ensure a smooth transition. Our approach includes introducing the participant to the referral partner personally, when possible. This may involve scheduling joint meetings or calls, and ensuring that the participant understands the next steps and has any necessary contact information. We prioritize continuity of care by maintaining regular contact with our referral partners. This allows us to track the participant's progress, address any issues that arise, and ensure that the participant is receiving the support they need. If any challenges or barriers are encountered during the referral process, we work closely with both the participant and the referral partner to resolve these issues promptly and effectively.

All referrals and follow-up actions are documented. This includes recording the referral details, outcomes, and any additional support provided. We use this documentation to monitor the participant's journey and assess the effectiveness of the referral process.

For cases where recovery supports extend beyond 5-7 days or involve multiple episodes of services, we will ensure that Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) data is collected and entered into the DMHA Electronic Billing System (DEBS). This practice will allow us to comply with reporting requirements and track the long-term effectiveness of our referrals.

Our experience in providing warm handoffs is extensive. We have successfully referred individuals to various services, including SUD treatment, mental health treatment, legal services, housing services, food pantries, educational support, job training, and many other social services and entities that support individual needs and personal goals. Our strong network of providers and our dedicated approach have resulted in positive outcomes and enhanced support for those we serve. We regularly review and refine our referral processes based on feedback from participants and partners. This continuous improvement ensures that we remain responsive to the needs of our community and maintain high standards of service delivery.

Connection Café's referral process is designed to ensure that participants receive the appropriate support and resources through a streamlined and effective warm handoff system. By leveraging our established network, maintaining close communication with

partners, and prioritizing continuity of care, we strive to achieve optimal outcomes for every individual we serve.

- b. Identify any referral partners that will be contracted for this project. Be sure to clearly describe their roles and responsibilities, related qualifications and experience, and how you will maintain oversight of the subcontractors' activities.

The Landing in Hancock County and Jay County Drug Coalition (P.A.S.T.) would assist with providing peer support services in the region where they have been providing services under the Indiana Recovery Network. As a subcontractor, they would be expected to employ certified peer recovery supports to continue to build upon already established relationships. Supervision of peers will be required by a certified peer supervisor and Connection Cafe will meet bi-weekly with representatives overseeing the grant to ensure that all processes are being followed by DMHA guidelines.

SOW Section 10 – Ridesharing Services

- a. Please propose an estimated total monthly cost to coordinate and provide ridesharing services for one (1) month. Please provide a narrative explaining the various factors contributing to the estimated monthly cost. If your region includes public transportation detail how you will leverage this resource to serve your clients.

We estimate \$7500 monthly for ridesharing services. Rural counties and outliners have a very hard transportation issue. Alternative resources are always utilized when possible such as Medicab, or transportation provided by the treatment provider. This is an area that continues to be a barrier in our region which is mostly rural.

SOW Section 11-12 – Data Requirements & Project Management

- a. Describe your approach to project management. Identify a Regional Recovery Hub Liaison, as described in Section 12.a of the Scope of Work (Attachment A). Please describe their experience with project management and attach their resume to your submission, if applicable.

The Connection Café has been successful and effective in managing the comprehensive services provided by 14 certified peers across 7 counties to date. We have mechanisms in place for regular and real-time communications (e.g., meetings, texts, emails), peer supervision and support, tracking and monitoring data, regularly reporting data to multiple entities and through various data systems including Recovery Link, and using data for continuous quality improvements. If funded, we will utilize the same approach to project management across the Region 8 Hub with the addition of an Associate Director who will share in some of the oversight.

Lauren Worth, who has been with the Connection Café since 2021, will serve as the Region 8 Regional Recovery Hub Liaison (see resume in flash drive) to assist in providing data quality checks such that all month report data is as complete and high-

quality as possible. They will work across the region to ensure that needs are being assessed, individuals appropriately served, and that services and expenditures are adequately captured, as well as any other state-issued tasks.

- b. Describe your preferred approach to coordination and collaboration with DMHA.

In addition to meeting with the other Contractors/Regional Recovery Hubs on a regular basis, Connection Cafe's preferred approach to coordination with DMHA would be a monthly meeting with the DMHA grant manager and bi-annual site visits.

- c. Confirm your commitment to meet all reporting, meeting, and project management requirements outlined in Section 12 of the Scope of Work (Attachment A).

The Connection Café is fully committed to meeting all reporting, meeting, and project management requirements as outlined in Section 12 of the Scope of Work (Attachment A). We understand the importance of thorough and timely reporting to ensure transparency, accountability, and effective management of the contract. We are committed to submitting monthly reports, quarterly management and technology reports, ride-sharing data, and having a kickoff and monthly meetings with the State as well as any additional meetings, as requested.

Monthly Reports: We are committed to submitting comprehensive monthly reports that will include all required indicators:

- a. Number of all intakes completed
- b. Demographic information from intake, including age, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender
- c. Number of opioid/stimulant-specific intakes
- d. Number of mental health-specific intakes
- e. Number of peer hours spent in each county
- f. Number of peer supervision hours spent in each county
- g. Number of individuals receiving direct peer support services
- h. Number of individuals who received group peer support services
- i. Recovery data required in the DMHA data platform

These reports will be meticulously compiled and submitted on time, capturing all relevant data points as specified. We recognize that the State reserves the right to adjust the data required, and we are prepared to adapt to any such changes promptly.

Quarterly Management and Technology Reports: We will submit detailed quarterly reports that will provide a transparent overview of our operational costs and resource allocation by capturing:

- a. Administrative costs/fees
- b. Amount of mandatory minimum payment received, including the month being reported on

- c. Amount of technical time and equipment used
- d. Number of management hours with each site
- e. Description of the management needed
- f. Description of any other oversight provided

Ride-Sharing Data: Our monthly reports will also include the following which will help us monitor and optimize our transportation services to support participants effectively:

- a. Number of rides provided to participants
- b. Destination of each ride (e.g., doctors, treatment centers)
- c. Average cost per ride
- d. Average cost per month

Meetings with the State: If funded, within two weeks of finalizing the contract, we will have a meeting to kick-off the project. Subsequently, we will schedule, facilitate and coordinate a monthly meeting for which we provide an agenda in addition.

Data Tracking, Reporting, and Continuous Quality Improvement: To ensure accuracy and reliability in our data reporting, we will collaborate closely with the IU School of Public Health. This partnership will enable us to track and report all required data points comprehensively. We will leverage their expertise in data management and analysis to ensure compliance with reporting requirements. The data collected through these reports will not only fulfill reporting requirements but also serve as a foundation for continuous quality improvement. We will use this information to assess our performance, identify areas for enhancement, and strengthen our capacity as a Regional Recovery Hub. Our commitment to quality improvement will be reflected in our ongoing efforts to refine our services and address any barriers or issues related to the contract requirements.

The Connection Café is committed to fulfilling all reporting, meeting, and project management requirements as specified in Section 12 of the Scope of Work. Our established processes, collaboration with the IU School of Public Health, and focus on continuous quality improvement will ensure that we meet and exceed the expectations outlined in the contract.