RFP 2024-001 Housing Crisis Referral and Information Services
Official Questions and Answers

All questions should be directed to the RFP Authorized Contact Person: Natasha Ponczek Shoemake at HSDCompetitions@austintexas.gov or in the PartnerGrants database by no later than Wednesday, May 15, 2024 by 3PM CST.

Last Updated May 15, 2024

Question No.	Questions from Agencies	Answers from HSO
1	For the Information Services section, is there a location preference?	The purpose of this RFP is to provide services to persons in a housing crisis in Austin/Travis County, and it would be best to have staff members located in Austin/Travis County.
2	What is the call volume? How would we make an estimate for the metrics?	Determining the call volume is difficult since this varies depending on several factors, including the type(s) of services proposed. Recent data from HMIS shows there were 7,000 Coordinated Assessments completed in a year and projections for 2024 is that there will be 10,000 CAs completed. The City is opening it up to the agencies to propose goals that make sense based on community data as well as staffing and services being proposed.
3	Are the hours suggested, 7 days a week?	Minimum expectation is that programming will be Monday through Friday, 7am-7pm with an option for persons to leave a message, however agencies are free to propose their own additional hours. If budget allows, 7 days-per-week would be optimal. See Scope of Work for more information.
4	First section, Question 4 asks for a brief summary of the program. Our program has multiple divisions involved in our planned program and I am not sure how to explain it here.	This is an unscored question that helps the evaluators understand the general program being proposed. The expectation is to just briefly summarize the program and how it relates to the RFP objectives.
5	I am not sure about the types of services related to disaster for first section, Question 7 – what services would be helpful for disaster?	This is an unscored question that is meant to understand what services the agency may be able to offer in the time of an emergency that may be for homeless-related or non-homeless-related callers. Some examples might include other programs the agency runs that could be of help to the City's emergency response or a routing option for connection to outside services/hotlines in a state of emergency.

6	Can we add letters of support to our application?	An agency is free to add letters of support to their submission, however, the letter of support will not be used to evaluate the proposal.
7	Threshold review timeline – do we need to do a new threshold?	The threshold review must be submitted once per 12 months per agency (from date of the release of the RFP- April 11, 2023) and remains valid for all competitions closing within that time period. The threshold application will be reviewed by APH staff and the agency will be notified once approved, usually within five to seven business days. The threshold submittal date must be included on the Intent to Apply form, but the threshold does not have to be approved to submit the Intent to Apply – which won't be approved until the threshold is approved. When/if the threshold review AND the Intent to Apply is approved, the agency will be able to move forward to submit a Final Application in Partnergrants.
8	Intent to apply? What is required to upload?	The intent to apply only requires written responses without a required upload. The agency must fill out the program name, description, and general program type. In this RFP there is not a large variety of program types being solicited, so an answer of "Digital services" will suffice. Don't leave fields blank – just put NA if not applicable.
9	The scope mentions kiosks, we have some plans for having a call center set-up. Will we have to also have kiosks?	The Council member mentions kiosks in the original budget rider in relation to the funding for this solicitation and agencies are asked to explain how they might provide kiosks, but it is not required to have kiosks in the program design and is not a primary focus of the services. The kiosks may require an agency to partner with other organizations or providers like hospitals to host these kiosks, if included in the proposal, but they are not required. Kiosks may also be defined creatively, though clearly.
10	How are agencies to develop goals for the program?	The first two outputs and two outcomes are required for all proposals, and the last outcomes are only for agencies who propose diversion services. Agencies are asked to propose goals based on staffing, operations and general information available to the agency based on past experience, community data, or other research. See information in question 2 above.

		While proposals for this solicitation may propose to include Diversion services as outlined as eligible under this program, this solicitation will not award any "stand-alone" diversion projects but only diversion services in addition to the Informational and Referral Services.
11	Question 10 Program Evaluation – Is there an expectation that we do a new process that gets approved by the City of Austin to be an evaluation of the program?	Exhibit G – RFP Evaluation Scoring Rubric Summary for question 10 states, "Description of quality improvement are adequate and illustrate that data is reviewed by program staff and organization leadership to identify areas for improvement and take action on those areas. All parts of each question are answered but there still may be some questions. OR may not provide fully detailed answer that includes concrete information, timelines, and examples, but it is enough to know they will be able to evaluate."
12	Is it expected that a program can serve all of the languages mentioned in the scope of work in the question about Language Access Plan?	Yes. Since this program is serving the public through a hotline, language access is an important component. Here are some resources for developing a language access plan. Language Access Assessment and Planning Tool for Federally Conducted and Federally Assisted Programs (lep.gov)
13	For the staffing plan, it isn't expected that all of the staff will be hired already before the program starts, correct?	Agencies are not expected to have staff hired already in place. Exhibit G- RFP Evaluation Scoring Rubric Summary states, "Agency indicated an understanding of staffing needed to accomplish activities in the proposed program, and demonstrates current adequate staffing, plans to hire, or plans for other accommodations sufficient to accomplish activities to ensure high-quality service provision."
14	Please explain the rules for the naming convention for uploads.	Naming convention instructions: Only name your uploaded documents with letters and numbers. To reduce possible submission and/or review delays, please ensure the title of any attached file from your local drive DOES NOT contain any special characters. Letters and numbers are acceptable.
15	It doesn't seem like we can edit the Application. How are we supposed to answer the questions?	After each green-shaded question, there is a box that is editable with the label "Click or tap here to enter text".

		It isn't advised for agencies to put the word document into an editable format instead of using the provided form. However, if compiling responses in a separate document: Offerors must include all questions and narrative before their answer, so the Proposal appears the same as the provided template. Also, make sure to include the exact wording of the drop-down menus.
16	Please explain the amounts we are supposed to put in the budget forms. Do we use the full $1.6 million or the $833K?	The budget spreadsheet includes instructions on the first tab. For the 12-month tab agencies may enter an amount up to the 12-month amount of $833,530 and in the one-time award tab agencies may enter an amount up to the available amount of $250,000.
17	Could you please explain the relationship between the Digital Crisis Housing Referral and Info Services and 211?	The RFP references 311, but there is not a reference to 211. In section VI. Services and Eligible Costs, it says that agencies must "Develop and implement direct referral systems to assist homelessness related referrals from City of Austin's 3-1-1 system. Ensure the 3-1-1 system can provide direct connections to the funded program without participants needing to call another number."
18	You mention the volume of Coordinated Entry (CE), but it seems many more people could need assistance than just those who go to CE. Do you have any more data to help us understand the volume?	See question 2 and question 10 for information.
19	Per the RFP, this program will serve those who are experiencing homelessness and those at risk of homelessness. Will the call volume for Coordinated Assessments be larger than 10K for 2024?	See question 2 and question 10 for information.
20	Does HMIS offer call-center functionality, or will that need to be developed?	An agency will need to propose a program that will work with HMIS, but the HMIS system is managed separately, and the functionality would have to be explored to coordinate with the call center.
21	Related, does the data have to go directly into HMIS, or could a	HMIS is administer by the Ending Community Homelessness Coalition and the program will have to

	connection be developed between a call center/support software and HMIS be acceptable?	enter data into HMIS. An agency can have a separate program software and explore options to satisfy HMIS requirements and connectivity or data sharing.