Request for Proposals for Statewide Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS) Administrative Agency

Statement of Purpose

The statewide HMIS Governance Committee, a body of representatives from each of the state of North Carolina's 12 Continua of Care (CoCs), is accepting bids for an entity to administer a statewide Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). Proposals are welcomed from Non-Profit Organizations, Institutions of Higher Learning, and For-Profit Entities.

Homeless services, emergency assistance and local government agencies use HMIS to collect demographic and service information about homeless and formerly homeless households who seek and obtain services. Local communities and the State of North Carolina use and analyze the gathered information to identify emerging trends and generates reports for agencies, local CoCs, funding agencies, and local/state/federal governments. The Governance Committee seeks an HMIS Administrative Agency that has experience operating an HMIS database or similar system, has implemented data quality control and security, and brings an understanding of Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) regulations and grant processes. A successful applicant will have working knowledge with various types of homeless programs including (but not limited to) permanent supportive housing, rapid re-housing, emergency assistance networks, transitional housing, and emergency shelter programs. The system must be operated pursuant to HUD regulations detailed in the following document: www.onecpd.info/resources/documents/CoCProgramFundingforHMIS.pdf

The HMIS Administrative Agency must work in collaboration with, and take direction from, the Statewide HMIS Governance Committee.

NC Statewide HMIS Implementation Background:

Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) is a centralized database that allows a community to obtain an unduplicated count of persons served by homeless programs. Additionally, HMIS provides information about the flow of individuals and families who access services, what types of services are being provided and can be a tool to help evaluate the effectiveness of homeless programs while providing information for crucial policy development. In North Carolina, all 12 CoCs participate in one statewide HMIS system.

HMIS was congressionally mandated and was implemented by HUD in the early 2000s. Each CoC is responsible for selecting its HMIS and for ensuring that federally funded agencies participate. HUD expects all agencies serving homeless people to participate in the HMIS that covers its community regardless of whether not the agency received

federal funding. However, at a minimum all federally funded agencies are expected to participate, with the exception of domestic violence agencies, which are prohibited from entering data into HMIS by the Violence Against Women Act. HUD requires the domestic violence agencies to use a comparable system and to share their de-identified, aggregate data with their Continuum of Care (CoC). There is currently no system available for DV agencies in NC that meets HMIS standards.

On June 22, 2003, HUD published proposed data elements for HMIS in the Federal Register. Additional guidance was published in the Federal Register on July 30, 2004. New Program Description Data Elements, Data Standards for Universal Data Elements, and Program Specific Data Elements were published in March 2010.

In 2004 the N.C. Interagency Council for Coordinating Homeless Programs (ICCHP) facilitated a discussion for all of North Carolina's CoCs which led to a partnership for the development and implementation of a statewide HMIS. As of July 2013 all 12 NC CoCs covering all 100 counties participate in the North Carolina HMIS, called the Carolina Homeless Information Network (CHIN).

During the process of developing the statewide database all stakeholders identified the importance of the database being run by a non-governmental agency so as to avoid becoming an official state database. The majority of homeless service providers in North Carolina are nonprofit organizations, and these agencies articulated a strong preference for a nonprofit organization to coordinate the system. While there is a strong preference for a non-governmental agency to administer the system, all stakeholders acknowledge the importance of Federal, State and Local government agencies support for the NC HMIS system and are committed to partnering with them in the full implementation of this project.

In 2004 representatives from several CoCs worked with the ICCHP to develop a Request for Applicants, seeking a nonprofit or university willing to assume ownership of the CHIN project for a minimum of five (5) years. Specifically, the collaboration sought an agency that would function as coordinator, data manager, educator, technician, monitor and fiscal sponsor. The North Carolina Housing Coalition (NCHC) and the North Carolina Coalition to End Homelessness (NCCEH) were selected to co-administer the project. In 2005, the partnership selected software from Bowman Systems as the platform for the statewide database.   In 2008, CHIN became a project of NCHC and the role of the partnership's oversight changed. Oversight of the system was provided by the NCHC Board of Directors, with recommendations from a committee made up of representatives from CoCs across the state and other stakeholders.

In 2012, the oversight committee adopted a new fee structure that was created to ensure fair cost sharing across the CoCs. Each CoC now has a fee that includes a set number of user licenses and is based on the Housing Inventory Chart. This fee structure replaces one that billed individual users and provided little oversight and accountability for the CoC.

In order to be in compliance with new HEARTH regulations, the role of the oversight committee was again changed and a new governance structure was created. The Governance Committee is comprised of one representative and an alternate from each of the participating COCs across the state, representatives from NCHC, NCCEH , and the ICCHP, and three at large members. In January 2014 a MOU was entered into between all members of the Governance Committee detailing the responsibilities of each party to the collaboration. A copy of this MOU is available upon request.

Project Scope:

The following are minimum requirements for operating the NC statewide HMIS system. Additional requirements or specifications to meet HUD HMIS and Continuum of Care specifications can be found here:
www.onecpd.info/resources/documents/CoCProgramFundingforHMIS.pdf.

I.   The selected vendor is required to abide by and provide the following:

1.1. The 12 Continua of Care make up a statewide HMIS entity. Therefore, core services will be directed to a statewide system, operating under the Governance Committee.
1.2. Core services will entail those minimum services necessary for HMIS reporting according to HUD and Veterans Administration (VA) requirements.
1.3. Enhanced services will entail those above and beyond minimum services necessary for agencies and CoCs to provide accurate reporting to HUD and VA. Enhanced services will be established by the Governance Committee, which may include reports as requested by individual agencies or special projects.
1.4. Software License and Set up: web-based application that should include access and operation by multiple levels of users including basic end user, agency administration and CoC/universal administration.
1.5. Compliance with all HUD Data standards including regular monitoring to insure system accurately complies with all HUD requirements and proactive efforts to update all relevant HMIS system elements to respond to changing HUD standards.
1.6. Capacity for client data collection which has the following attributes:
    1.6.1. User friendly screens and interface that allow for a wide range of client data collection services including:
    1.6.2. All HUD required Universal and Program Specific Data Elements
    1.6.3. Client intake data
    1.6.4. Assessment tools
    1.6.5. History of services provided
    1.6.6. Program entry and exit history; ability to add multiple program entries/exit history
    1.6.7. Capacity to record family/household data
    1.6.8. Tracking of referral data
    1.6.9. Infrastructure to implement HUD's coordinated assessment requirements
    1.6.10. Batch entry functionality

      1.6.11. Streamlined print Capability for individual client records

      1.6.12. Mobile technology/application for mobile devices that is integrated is preferred.

      1.6.13. Identification card scanning and/or biometric automated scanning capability preferred

2. Reporting and Export Functionality

  2.1. Built-in standard reports and forms for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) such as the Annual Performance Report (APR), the Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR), Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) Report, etc.

  2.2. Ability to generate customized/ad-hoc reports and forms from within the application without programmer's assistance on multiple levels:

      2.2.1. Client and program level reporting capacity that allows all individual users at each participating agency to build their own reports.

      2.2.2. Agency level reporting capacity that allows reports to be built that reflect data collected for multiple programs within each participating agency.

      2.2.3. System-wide reporting capacity that allows reports to be generated based on data collected from all participating programs and agencies within the Continuum.

  2.3. All reports viewable onscreen and available to print in user-friendly formats.

  2.4. Report functionality should include the ability to export to other industry standard applications such as Excel, Access, or Crystal reporting.

  2.5. Ability to recreate existing reports.

3. Case Management Documentation Services

  3.1. User-friendly interface that allows for recording case management information such as reminder (follow up)/calendaring capability; ability to capture case notes, and to upload external documents.

  3.2. Ability to record referral data (type, status, follow up).

  3.3. Real time bed vacancy/availability feature desired.

  3.4. Streamlined print capability for individual client records.

4. Data Transfer Capacity (If applicable)

  4.1. Data conversion and migration service and coordination (includes recreating existing reports) that is SQL.

  4.2. If proposal includes changing current software or moving data to a new database, the vendor will provide staff that will develop conversion strategy from the existing system including outlining estimated time needed for conversion.

  4.3. Test and verify conversion of data and data integrity that is accurate.

5. Installation and General Customization

5.1. Coordinate all activities essential to the implementation and installation of the new HMIS.

5.2. Provide customizations to accommodate the needs of participating agencies, including unique case management functionalities and data elements and agency specific reporting.

5.3. Provisions for receiving feedback on future software development.

5.4. Provisions for receiving, reviewing, and responding to both automated and requested software fixes in agreed upon timeframe.

6. Training and Support

6.1. Provide on-site training and/or consultation to new agencies which join in the database as part of the installation process.

6.2. Provide on-going customer support for the duration of the contract.

6.3. Provide online help/support request submission capability for the duration of the contract.

6.4. Make a test site available for new user training and demonstrations to non-participating agencies.

6.5. Provide after hours emergency support.

6.6. Collaborate with the HMIS Governance Committee and individual Continua of Care.

6.7. Provide a log and report on monthly agency satisfaction survey to the Governance Committee. This may be a random Likert scale survey or similar instrument sent to agencies following service requests.

6.8. Host meetings and trainings to support end users and system users across the state. Meetings and trainings may use a variety of technologies including, but not limited to on-line trainings, webinar, and teleconference or in-person forums. The priority will be to effectively serve all users across the state.

7. Data Hosting and Maintenance

7.1. Provide technical support, web-based data hosting, data backup and recovery for the duration of the contract.

7.2. Maintain staff and oversee customer support services for the duration of the contract.

7.3. Provide maintenance and product enhancement/upgrades as needed.

7.4. Provide and ensure reliable data backup and storage.

8. Security and Data Sharing

8.1. Technical safeguards to ensure highest level of client confidentiality, specifically, but not limited to:

8.2. Back end server data encryption and transmission

8.3. Automatic timeout/logoff

8.4. User name/password access

9. Automated audit trail

    9.1. Ability to restrict user level access to client information at the program level.
    9.2. Compliant with HIPAA, 42 CFR, and any other Federal, State, Local government regulations regarding privacy and confidentiality.
    9.3. Flexible data sharing capability that allows agencies to set limits and identify specific data elements that can be restricted and/or shared.
    9.4. Capacity for import/export of data through Extensive Markup Language (.XML) and Comma Separated Values (CSV).

10. <u>Separate but parallel data system for DV agencies</u>
    10.1.   Same tools as CoC providers only for DV agencies
    10.2.   Must protect identifiable client information to the VAWA standards

Organizational and Staff Capacity

Organization
It is incumbent that the selected agency has the technical expertise, demonstrated success, leadership, and knowledge of HMIS and how it interfaces within the context of the Continua of Care as defined/regulated by HUD and carried out on a daily basis by the CoCs. In <u>four pages</u> or less please discuss the organizations capacity in the following areas (If your agency is currently not providing HMIS services in a CoC setting, please discuss how you *will* address these areas):
- o Data management, including servers, backups and data protection.
- o HUD and HMIS requirements.
- o HUD and HMIS data reporting and analysis- in addressing this area please describe what are the 10-12 most important data reports your HMIS system should generate and why. Answers should go beyond "HUD Required."
- o Providing timely and accurate data reports.
- o Communication and Collaboration plan with Governance Committee and individual CoCs.

Staffing
Please provide an organizational spreadsheet showing the proposed staffing pattern for the statewide HMIS implementation. Please describe specific staff roles, organizational chart for HMIS staff, level of expertise (education, certification, and training) required to fill each position (HMIS and Homelessness expertise) and how this staffing pattern will lead to the overall success of the statewide HMIS implementation while keeping costs as low as possible.
**In consideration of HUD comparative analysis, NC CoCs have determined that a staffing pattern of 6-8 FTEs is sufficient for effectively operating the statewide HMIS. However, if applicant deems 6-8 FTEs insufficient, please justify additional staff and how this will benefit the statewide implementation.

Other Items to Consider:

Indicate how the individual positions will fit into the whole creating an effective efficient team. Please briefly discuss workflow and how this group will function together to meet the desired outcomes and deliverables described within this RFP.

Describe how your organization will keep track of staff hours dedicated to each CoC/State of NC for the purposes of tallying staff time spent working on projects for each CoC/State of NC.

Budgetary Parameters:

In North Carolina each CoC is responsible for paying for their share of the statewide HMIS expense. How that division is made will be reviewed annually and adjustments made as approved by the statewide Governance Committee. It will not be the selected organization's responsibility to raise funding for the operation of the statewide HMIS system. However, the HMIS Governance Committee expects the selected vendor to work in partnership with the Governance Committee and CoCs to identify additional revenue opportunities to cover HMIS costs with the goal of off-setting the cost burden to all the CoCs.

Budget

NC's Statewide HMIS implementation must have its own separate set of financial records, bookkeeping practices and auditing. Comingling of funds, accounts, or budgets is not allowed.

Please provide a comprehensive proposed annual project budget based on staffing patterns described above. Please provide justification and proof of cost effectiveness for each line item. Please do not title a line item "miscellaneous". Administrative overhead is an allowable expense. Please provide details and justify percent requested.

Other items to Consider:

HMIS Software Vendor- Currently the software vendor for the CHIN database is Bowman Systems. The Governance Committee is open to proposals which recommend a change to the software vendor. If you would recommend a change to the software vendor, please describe, in an additional page, why you would recommend changing software platforms, what alternative system you would recommend, its advantages and potential challenges, the assurance that the platform meets all HMIS specifications from HUD and is capable of producing all required HUD reports, and what support you will provide in transferring data from the current database to the new one.

Outcomes

In four pages or less, please address how your organization will address each of the following 5 categories of outcomes.

1. Mandatory HUD and VA reporting and analysis
   - Accurate Annual Performance Reports – APR, PITC, HIC, ESG and AHAR data, Consolidated Plan, CAPER, VA reports and other HUD funded programs
   - Basic HUD reports to be available on a weekly/monthly/annual basis as required/needed.
   - Consistent and accurate data.
   - Ability to export data to VA Repository.
   - Present, interpret, discuss, or write about conclusions, inferences, and results gained from data

2. Functional local CoC reporting and analysis
   - Produce community-level and state-level reports that show progress on HEARTH outcomes.
   - Generate customized reports as requested by the HMIS Governance Committee
   - Present, interpret, discuss, or write about conclusions, inferences, and results gained from data;
   - Assist local CoCs with exporting data for local analysis

3. Management of Emergency Assistance Networks (EAN)
   - Manage EAN programs and program creation/modification/expansion as requested via Governance Committee guidelines.
   - EAN reports to be available on a weekly/monthly/annual basis as needed/required.
   - Present, interpret, discuss, or write about conclusions, inferences, and results gained from data;
   - Respond to new EAN program requests according to guidelines established by the Governance Committee

4. Coordinated intake and assessment processes
   - Real Time Bed Availability- ensure Coordinated Intake staff can identify shelter opportunities for clients.
   - Assist in developing inter and intra CoC information sharing standards and permissions.
   - Capacity to host VI, SPDAT, DESC VA, or other widely used Coordinated Assessment tools.

5. General
   - Run scripts on a routine basis to eliminate duplicate files
   - General user manual with glossary of terms and data entry guidelines.
   - Respond to 100% of all service requests within 4 hours, providing estimation of service time for resolution.

Application Specifics:

Letter of Intent Due March 31, 2014- Please submit a letter of intent to Heather Dillashaw (hdillashaw@ashevillenc.gov), NC Governance Committee Chair indicating your organization's desire to participate in this RFP process. Letters are for information purposes only, are not binding, and will have no bearing on final decision.

Due Date- *Applications are due on or before 5:00pm EST Friday May 16, 2014*
One electronic copy of the application and supporting materials are due to Heather Dillashaw (hdillashaw@ashevillenc.gov), NC Governance Committee Chair.

Review Process: *Interviews with top candidates will be conducted during the month of June. Further information on interview will be forthcoming.*

Implementation Dates: Successful Vendor will commence operation as HMIS Administrative Agency no later than July 1, 2015, with a target date of January 2015.

For Questions - Please contact Heather Dillashaw, Governance Committee Chair at hdillashaw@ashevillenc.gov.

Amendments: Amendments or updates to this RFP (if applicable) will be emailed to all interested parties after March 31, 2014.

Required Attachments: Please submit the following applicable documents electronically with your application. All documents should be most recent and in good standing as commonly accepted:

For non-profit agencies:

- o IRS Tax Exempt Letter

- o Solicitation License

- o 990

For all applicants:

- o No Overdue Tax Statement

- o Attested Statement of status of good standing with Federal Government

- o Copy of most recent audit with Management Letter/ Audit Compliance Findings

- o List of Board of Directors, with contact information

- Last complete FY and current year Statement of Activities/ Revenue vs. Expense Statement

- Proposed Annual line item budget for implementing CHIN project

- Organizational Bylaws & articles of incorporation

- Code of Conduct

- Federal Tax ID number

- DUNS Number

- Type of Organization & supporting document (Corporation, general partnership, Limited Liability Corporation)

- Signature Page- Statement attesting that the content of application is true, accurate, and provided in good faith signed by the applicant's highest-ranking officer (ED, CEO, and President).