Request for Proposals

HOMELESS MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM (HMIS) LEAD AGENCY

For the
VERMONT BALANCE of STATE CONTINUUM of CARE
On behalf of the **Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness**

Vermont State Housing Authority (VSHA) is seeking proposals, on behalf of the Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness (VCEH), from qualified applicants to become the HMIS Lead Agency to serve the Vermont Balance of State Continuum of Care geographic area. All proposals will be evaluated on threshold criteria developed by the VCEH as detailed in the full RFP. The RFP is available on VSHA's website at www.vsha.org; on VCEH's website at www.helpingtohousevt.org; or by contacting Daniel Blankenship by telephone or email (see below).

The anticipated date of VCEH's decision is April 21, 2015. VCEH reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to select none of the proposals submitted.

RESPONSE DEADLINE:

- All applications must be submitted electronically via fax or email to VSHA-Daniel Blankenship.
- All applications are due by **12PM - MONDAY, APRIL 6, 2015**.
- Send a separate follow-up email to Daniel to ensure successful receipt of your proposal.
- Submit all RFP questions to Daniel via email only. See page 6 of RFP for CoC and HMIS resources.

SUBMIT PROPOSALS TO:
Vermont State Housing Authority
Attn: Daniel Blankenship
1 Prospect Street, Montpelier, VT 05602
Fax: 802-828-2111 or 802-828-3248
Email: daniel@vsha.org
Phone: 802-828-0294

SECTION I. INTRODUCTION

Eligible entities
Non-Profit Organizations, State or Local Government and Institutions of Higher Learning.

Statement of Purpose
The purpose of this Request for Proposals ("RFP") is to obtain proposals from eligible and qualified entities ("Respondent(s)") to provide the Vermont Balance of State Continuum of Care ("VT BoS CoC") with a Lead Agency to oversee, and potentially administrate, the CoC Homeless Management Information System ("HMIS"). The VT BoS CoC Steering Committee will engage the services of the Respondent(s) that it determines is/are the best qualified based upon the Evaluation Criteria set forth.

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. HMIS data is used and analyzed to identify emerging trends and generate reports for provider agencies, local CoCs, funding agencies, and local/state/federal governments. The VT BoS CoC Steering Committee seeks an HMIS Lead Agency with experience overseeing a private contractor, and/or possible direct data administration, of an HMIS database or similar system; has implemented data quality control and security; and brings an understanding of HUD regulations and grant processes.

A successful applicant will have a familiarity and/or direct working knowledge with various types of homeless programs such as permanent supportive housing, rapid re-housing, transitional housing, and emergency shelter programs and networks. The system must be operated pursuant to HUD regulations through the HMIS Lead Agency who works in collaboration with the VT BoS CoC HMIS Committee, with ultimate authority residing with the VT Coalition to End Homelessness.

HMIS Implementation
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. HMIS was congressionally mandated and implemented by HUD in the early 2000s. Each HUD CoC is responsible for the designation of a single HMIS software for the geographic area and to ensure the participation of required federally-funded agencies. HUD aspires for all agencies serving homeless people to participate in the HMIS that covers its community regardless of whether not the agency receives 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; as well as legal service providers. HUD requires the domestic violence agencies to use a comparable system and to share their de-identified, aggregate data with their CoC.

Vermont Balance of State Continuum of Care
The Vermont Balance of State CoC utilizes ServicePoint for its HMIS software with Bowman Systems its vendor. HMIS-ServicePoint data administration is operated within the VT BoS CoC by a private subcontractor overseen by a HMIS Lead Agency (VSHA currently acting as interim). Substantial support is provided by the Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness (facilitated by the HMIS Committee and directed by the Steering Committee), numerous service providers, state agencies and other entities.

SECTION II. PROPOSAL PREPARATION

A. PROJECT SCOPE OF SERVICES

The following are minimum requirements for operating the VT BoS CoC HMIS system.

I. The selected Respondent will be required to deliver the following to the VT BoS CoC:

HMIS LEAD RESPONSIBILTIES

Oversight and Planning
- Coordinate HMIS Strategic Planning Process (*VT BoS CoC responsible for final approval*)
- Oversee Selection & Procurement of HMIS Software (*VT BoS CoC responsible for final approval*)
- Develop & Update HMIS Governance Charter & MOU (*VT BoS CoC responsible for final approval*)
- Update CoC on HMIS Implementation
- Ensure HMIS Implementation meets HUD Guidelines
- Ensure HMIS Compliance for all Programs; including, but not limited to, working in consultation with the ESG recipient [VT Agency of Human Services-Office of Economic Opportunity]
- Confirm Software Compliance
- Support HMIS Committee and related activities
- Establish & Track Project Milestones
- Incorporate User Feedback into Planning

HMIS Project Administration
- HMIS Project Management
- HMIS Grant Management
- Complete HMIS Grant Application
- Maintain Agency Agreements and Documentation
- Track Agency License Fees
- Manage Software Vendor Payments
- Develop & Manage HMIS Budget
- Facilitate Lead facilitation with VT BoS CoC to Ensure Sufficient Funding for HMIS Implementation
    (*VT BoS CoC responsible for securing funds*)
- HMIS Project Staffing
- Manage HMIS Subcontractors
- Maintain End User Agreements and Documentation
- Maintain Data Sharing Agreements and Documentation

Policies and Procedures
- Develop Data and System Security Guidelines
- Develop HMIS Policies and Procedures
  (*VT BoS CoC responsible for final approval*)
- Ensure CoC has a Client Acknowledgement Policy
- Ensure CoC has an HMIS Data Release Protocol
- Develop and Update Privacy Policy
- Develop and Update Disaster Recovery Plan

Monitoring
- Ensure Individual Agency HMIS Participation for each Homeless Program: CoC, ESG, PATH, RHYP, VA
- Monitoring Data Quality
- Enforce Data and System Security
- Monitor Agency Participation
- Inform agencies of Monitoring Results or Findings
- Provide Monitoring Reports to CoC
- Provide consultation and reports to each administrator of all related homeless programs [HUD-CoC Programs; HUD-ESG Programs; HHS-RHY Programs; VA-Homeless Programs; HHS-PATH; and others as determined by the VT BoS CoC]
- Assist CoC to Enforce Findings
  (*VT BoS CoC responsible for enforcement*)

Administration and Support
- Monitor System Operations and Administration
- Identify Training Needs and Mechanisms
- Identify CoC-level Reporting Needs & Mechanisms
- Review/Submit Performance Measurement Reporting to CoC
- Review/Submit AHAR Reports to HUD
  (*VT BoS CoC responsible for final approval before HUD submission and Public Release*)
- Review/Submit PIT & HIC Reports to HUD in Coordination with Collaborative Applicant
  (*VT BoS CoC responsible for final approval before HUD submission and Public Release*)

HMIS ADMINISTRATION AND SUPPORT RESPONSIBILITIES
Administered internally by HMIS Lead <u>or</u> through direct oversight of a qualified subcontractor(s).

System Administration
- System Operation
- System Maintenance
- Track and Resolve HMIS Issues

Training and Technical Support
- New Agency Set Up
- Provide Prompt Help Desk Support
- Provide Software Training
- Provide Direct Software TA to Agencies
- Provide Policies and Procedures Training

Reporting
- Ensure Reporting Capability (macro/micro)
- Provide CoC-level & NOFA Reporting
- Ensure Availability of Data for Monitoring
- Compile AHAR Data Reports
- Compile PIT & HIC Data Reports
- Compile Performance Measurement Data Reports
- Support Individual Agency Reporting Needs for each Homeless Program: CoC, ESG, PATH, RHYP, VA
- Other Individual Agency Reporting Requests as approved by CoC

HMIS Software Vendor
Currently the software vendor for the VT BoS CoC is Bowman Systems [ServicePoint]. The VT BoS CoC is not open to proposals that recommend a change to the software vendor at this time.

Budgetary Parameters
Although it will not be the selected HMIS Lead's sole responsibility to raise funds for the operation of the HMIS system, the selected entity is expected to work in partnership with the VT BoS CoC to identify and procure additional revenue sources (and in-kind support) to cover associated costs and ensure effective operations of the HMIS within the CoC. Currently, each provider agency is responsible for paying for their individual license fees for use of the HMIS within the VT BoS CoC. There are several potential opportunities to leverage additional funding sources, but at this time the only dedicated funding to support general HMIS implementation is a dedicated HUD CoC-HMIS grant (est. $30,000). The selected HMIS Lead will assume direct oversight of the CoC-HMIS grant in the role of a HUD Grant Recipient effective June 1, 2015. Access to the full CoC-HMIS grant amount may ultimately be utilized solely by the HMIS Lead for HMIS implementation, if applicable, but only a portion (est. $9,000) will be made available upon the formal start date until such time that a transition plan is established to ensure current HMIS data administration services are maintained within the VT BoS CoC.

HMIS Resources & Guidance
- McKinney-Vento Act as amended by the HEARTH Act: **CoC Program Interim Rule**
  https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/2033/hearth-coc-program-interim-rule/ [HMIS-60/86-88]

- HUD Exchange-Homeless Management Information Systems
  https://www.hudexchange.info/hmis/

- New 2014 HMIS Data Standards (October 2014)
  https://www.hudexchange.info/news/2014-hmis-data-standards-new-resources-published/

- CoC Program Funding for Homeless Management Information Systems [HUD CoC grant]
  https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/CoCProgramFundingforHMIS.pdf

B. PROPOSAL DETAILS

In response to this RFP, Respondents must provide *clear*, *complete*, and *concise* responses to each of the following questions and information requests.

1. **Organizational Overview and Documentation**

Provide the name, address, telephone number, and email address of the Respondent. Identify a primary contact person regarding the response. Provide an overview of the Respondent's business entity, including legal structure, full legal name, and state of organization. Provide documentation on Respondent's business entity including organizational documents, federal employer identification number and evidence of Respondent's good standing with the state.

2. **Organizational Capacity**

The selected agency must possess technical expertise, demonstrated success, and knowledge with:

Oversight and Planning
1) Please describe your experience and approach to strategic planning and stakeholder engagement.
2) Please describe your experience and approach to convening stakeholders in a collaborative manner and facilitating workgroups – particularly groups of stakeholders covering a large geographic area (state or regional).
3) Please describe any experience you have working with other relevant social service systems and providers, including the homeless service system.
4) Please describe any experience or familiarity with systems planning including coordinated entry or system coordination.

Project Administration
5) Please describe your experience and approach to grant administration and project management.
6) Please describe your experience with managing project budgets.
7) Please describe your experience with identifying and securing funding for programs (for example applying for grant funding, securing private donations, etc.).
8) Please describe any relevant experience managing an IT project similar to HMIS.
9) Please describe any experience your agency has with developing cross-agency policies and/or procedures.
10) Please describe any experience or capacity for monitoring compliance with policies and procedures, including approach to providing feedback to stakeholders being monitored.

Training and Support
11) Please describe any experience relevant to providing IT support and training/technical assistance.
12) Please describe your approach to providing Training and Support including ways in which you are able to be responsive to user needs by providing innovative and accessible mechanisms of training and support.
13) Please describe how you are able to work with users that have a wide range of experience and capacity levels.

Reporting
14) Please describe any experience and/or expertise you have with grantee reporting.
15) Please describe any experience and/or expertise you have with reviewing and analyzing data.

System Administration

16) Please describe any experience and/or expertise your agency has with performing IT system administration.
    a. IF NONE – please describe your experience and approach to monitoring subcontractors – particularly IT subcontractors.

3. **Proposed Approach**
   1) Please describe the services your agency can provide in Year 1 as HMIS Lead (given limited initial budget). Include your potential plan for staffing and division of roles and responsibilities. Include a proposed budget for Year 1, with funding to support current HMIS System Data Administration for at least 3 months.
   2) Please describe your plan for transitioning the role of HMIS System Data Administration from the current subcontractor to internal agency staff (if applicable). If you do not plan to transition HMIS System Data Administration responsibilities please describe how you propose to manage and oversee the HMIS System Data Administrator in a manner that will ensure all services are provided seamlessly to end users.
   3) Please describe several potential innovative strategies for the Vermont Balance of State Continuum of Care to increase the funding available for HMIS over several years.
   4) Please describe any potential suggestions for maximizing the use of the current HMIS budget to ensure a successful HMIS implementation.

4. **Staffing Plan**

Please provide an organizational spreadsheet showing your proposed staffing pattern for the VT BoS CoC 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 VT BoS CoC HMIS implementation while keeping costs at a minimum. Indicate how the individual positions will fit into the whole creating an effective and efficient team. 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 HMIS for the purposes of tallying staff time spent working on projects for VT BoS CoC. Provide resumes for each individual so identified and/or a brief summary of each individual's qualifications to perform the work in question.

5. **Budget and Financial Resources**

Please provide a comprehensive proposed annual project budget based upon the 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. Vermont BoS CoC 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 an explanation of how your organization will maintain sound financial records for the HMIS implementation.

6. **References**

Respondent must provide a minimum of three (3) letters of reference, with current/accurate contact information, from entities for which Respondent has performed services of a similar scope as those contemplated under this RFP within the past two (2) years.

C. STRUCTURE OF PROPOSAL

Each Respondent is required to submit a complete Proposal and attest to the accuracy and completeness of its Proposal. In all respects, the Respondent must comply with the instructions, formats and stipulations of this RFP including proper submission, proper format, meeting deadlines, inclusion and presentation of pricing information, and the terms and conditions of the proposed Final Contract.

The VT BoS CoC desires to consider Proposals in a consistent and easily comparable format as established in this RFP. Proposals not organized as set forth in this RFP may, at the VT BoS CoC's discretion, be considered invalid. Do not refer to other parts of your Proposal in lieu of answering a specific question. Do not provide references to filings or forms publicly available in lieu of providing specific information in the Proposal.

Section	Maximum Page Limit
1. Organizational Overview	Two (2) pages; not including support documentation
2. Organizational Capacity	Sixteen (16) pages
3. Proposed Approach	Five (5) pages
4. Staffing Plan	Two (2) pages
5. Budget and Financial Resources	Two (2) pages

D. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Each Proposal will be evaluated on a variety of factors, including, but not limited to, the following (in no particular order):

- Strategic Planning Capacity and Experience with facilitating stakeholder engagement in planning efforts – particularly at a statewide level
- Familiarity with Homeless Services and/or Social Service Providers and Systems
- Capacity in Grant Administration and Project Management
- Ability to develop funding strategies and coordinate funding sources and budget
- Experience or capacity managing an IT project/implementation such as or similar to HMIS
- Experience with Policies and Procedures
- Experience with Monitoring
- Familiarity with IT Support and Training/Technical Assistance – understand the types of issues that may come up with end users
- Experience with Grantee Reporting
- Experience with Data Cleaning and/or Analysis
- Internal Capacity to provide System Administration of Software
- Capacity to provide oversight of System Administration of Software

APPENDIX: DEFINITIONS

Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR):

A HUD report to the U.S. Congress on the state of homelessness in America.

Best Value Contracting

The award of a contract to one or more qualified Respondents that is based not solely on the lowest price, but rather on an analysis of multiple factors including but not limited to price, quality of work, capacity, and experience.

Collaborative Applicant

The Collaborative Applicant for the Vermont Balance of State Continuum of Care is Vermont State Housing Authority (VSHA). VSHA submits the annual HUD CoC Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) application on behalf of the CoC as well as overseeing the implementation of the HEARTH regulations under the guidance of the VCEH Steering Committee [Board].

Continuum of Care (CoC) Program Interim Rule

This interim rule, published in the Federal Register on July 31, 2012, establishes the regulations for the Continuum of Care Program and focuses on regulatory implementation of the Continuum of Care Program, including the Continuum of Care planning process. See *McKinney-Vento*.

Final Contract

The contract ultimately negotiated and entered into by and between the Vermont Balance of State Continuum of Care and the successful Respondent pursuant to an award under this RFP.

Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)

The community-wide database congressionally mandated for all programs funded through the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development homeless assistance grants.

Housing Inventory Chart of Homeless Beds (HIC)

A chart of all homeless beds available on a single day, coinciding with the PIT, within the CoC.

Housing & Urban Development (HUD)

The U.S. Department that funds many low-income and affordable housing initiatives, including the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, as amended by HEARTH, through the HUD Continuum of Care (CoC) Program and the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) Program.

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act As Amended by S.896 HEARTH Act of 2009

The HEARTH Act was enacted into law on May 20, 2009, with the consolidation of three separate homeless assistance programs administered by HUD under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act into a single grant program [*"HUD CoC Program," formerly known as Supportive Housing Program, Shelter Plus Care Program and the Section 8 Mod Rehab Program*]. The HEARTH Act also codifies into law the Continuum of Care planning process, a longstanding part of HUD's application process to assist homeless persons by providing greater coordination in response to their needs.

Point-in-Time Count (PIT)

A count on a single day, to coincide with the HIC, of all homeless people within the CoC geographic area.

Primary Decision-Making Group

The Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness responsible for compliance with the HUD CoC Interim Rule and coordinating HUD homelessness activities within the VT Balance of State CoC geographic area.

Proposal

Proposal refers to the complete response, including any exhibits or attachments, submitted by a Respondent as a result of this RFP.

Respondent

Respondent refers to any individual or entity submitting a response to this RFP.

Scope of Work

Scope of Work refers to the instructions and requirements stated in this RFP or portions thereof and any additional, supplementary instructions that are developed, incorporated, or promulgated subsequent to the distribution of this RFP.

Vermont Balance of State Continuum of Care (VT BoS CoC)

The Vermont geographic area recognized HUD and the federal government that incorporates all of the counties in Vermont with the exception of Chittenden County.

Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness (VCEH)

The primary decision-making body charged by HUD to be responsible for overseeing and/or administering the CoC functions within the VT BoS CoC including submitting the annual HUD CoC application, project evaluation and CoC monitoring, HMIS implementation, conducting a Point-in-Time Count of the Homeless/Housing Inventory Chart of Homeless Beds, etc.