

Homeless Hotline RFP Q&A

Question	Answer
Is there a minimum requirement on staff's educational background?	No
Will CSB look favorably on entities that propose staffing with special populations, like veterans?	Yes
How will CSB handle the one time, ramp-up costs?	If you have one time ramp up costs, show those under the "Program B" section of the budget. The ramp up costs will not be considered part of the annual contract award.
Does CSB have a requirement around bilingual staff?	No, the only requirement is access to translation services, if callers require.
Does CSB require recording of the calls?	No, CSB does not require recording. Applicants may consider recording for training and quality assurance purposes.
What are the dashboard requirements?	CSB is looking at applicants to describe the regular call center information that the applicant will provide CSB. These dashboards should include call volume, abandonment rate, response time, etc.
Is HMIS a web-based system?	Yes
Is there any other requirement for data collection besides HMIS?	No
Is the assessment embedded in HMIS?	Yes
Is CSB open to employing staff that work from home?	Yes, as long as appropriate information security guards are in place.
How does information about available beds gets communicated?	Shelters inform the call center about available beds several times during the day.
What is the financial reporting requirement?	CSB requires an annual financial report. The applicant will also have to submit invoices for cost reimbursement, based on the pricing/reimbursement structure that the applicant will propose.
Will CSB penalize the applicant if the call volume will decrease due to call center improvements?	No, CSB will not penalize the applicant based on a change of call volume. If the call volume decreases as only those that are truly in a housing crisis access the call center services we will consider adjusting (decreasing) expected diversion rates as well
What information can CSB provide on call duration?	We have two type of calls. 1. Initial calls that range from 5 minutes to 14 minutes. In general calls from single adults are on the lower end and calls from families are on the higher end. We are interested in proposals that include improvements to the initial caller experience and reduce call duration while ensuring effective diversion to safe housing alternatives and resources, where possible. 2. Very short calls that respond to an inquiry about waitlist position. We are looking for proposals that offer improvements that will streamline inquiries about waitlist position.

Would the provider be starting from scratch in developing a hotline program?	No. CSB and the provider would use the Policies and Procedures that were sent to everyone as a guideline and would make any adjustments or improvements collaboratively. CSB is not looking for a provider to invent a new program. The hotline will direct people to established services or established shelter programs, depending on whether they are single adults or families and depending on shelter capacity. CSB is not expecting any provider to be ready to implement the program in full on July 1, 2018 by themselves. CSB will work with the provider to help prepare the program for readiness by July 1, 2018.
Are all screening questions in CSP? If a caller calls more than once, would the provider need to go through the screening multiple times?	The provider would go through the entire screening in CSP once for each caller. If that person calls again, the provider would just verify their information, not re-collect it.
The hotline would function 7am - 11pm. What happens between 11pm and 7 am?	The line is transferred to one of the system's shelter providers. The low call volume overnight does not warrant a full time presence, and the shelter is always open.
Is there other data available, beyond the data provided at the bidders conference?	No
Is CSP web-based? Are licenses required?	Yes, CSP is web-based. Licenses are required for each person who accesses CSP. CSB purchases licenses from the vendor and the provider agencies purchase the licenses from CSB. Licenses are \$250 each in the first year, and then prorated for a much lower cost for subsequent years. The provider can include the cost of licenses under start-up costs in the application budget.
Can applicants include hardware requirements under start-up costs in the application budget?	Yes
Does the current hotline phone system belong to the current provider?	Yes. CSB would transfer the phone number to any new provider, to keep the number consistent.
Would services be provided from the provider's own location or a central location?	From the provider's own location.
Would the provider be able to contact the CSP provider to discuss systems integration?	Yes

Explain the shelter bed list management process.	The hotline makes reservations for open shelter beds. The shelters attempt to keep the bedlist updated in CSP so that the hotline knows how many beds are available and where. Given the transitory nature of the population, sometimes it's difficult to keep CSP updated. Sometimes people with reservations don't show up. To make sure the hotline always knows about vacancies, in addition to CSP, shelters also communicate with the hotline several times each day via email or phone (separate line as the hotline). CSB is open to suggestions regarding this process. CSB's priority is to fill all available shelter beds and make sure as few people are sleeping outside as possible.
What languages are encountered on the hotline?	Almost all callers speak English. The hotline may encounter Spanish or Somali. CSB does not require the provider to have language services on staff. The provider just needs to be able to access translation services when needed.
Is call volume higher in the winter?	No, call volume is actually lower in the winter because the system is in overflow and anyone who calls receives a bed. In the warmer months, when capacity for single adults is limited, callers are put on a waitlist for shelter and may call several days in a row to determine their place on the waitlist or get into shelter. Also, the number of families calling the hotline increases in the summer.
What screening is required for employees (e.g., background check, drug tests)?	CSB has no specific requirements for employee screening. CSB doesn't want to discriminate based on past substance use or criminal background.
What education and experience is CSB looking for in employees?	CSB is not looking to be overly restrictive. There are no specific degrees or experience required. Employees should be able to engage in active listening and should understand the ultimate goals of the hotline, so they can go off script when needed to identify the best option for the caller. Employees need to understand that callers are going through a great deal of stress and should always be respectful.
Are satisfaction surveys completed via CSP?	No, they are separate. CSB wants to see that surveys are conducted, documented, and used to improve customer service. CSB also does mock calls to evaluate hotline customer service.
What are the expectations for training?	CSB will help the provider set up and maintain the program, but cannot be the primary trainer for ongoing operations. There are emerging training resources on coordinated entry, including diversion and mediation services, that the provider could leverage. The exception is CSP - CSB will provide all CSP training and has to certify employees before they can access CSP.

Is CSB open to adjusting the call flow?	Yes, the provider and CSB can work together to improve the screening tool and improve efficiency. CSB can integrate changes in the call flow into CSP. CSB welcomes continual improvement - call flow and other processes do not have to remain static.
What is CSB looking for in a reporting dashboard?	CSB is looking for data that we can't produce in CSP, such as call volume, average wait time, lost calls, average handling time, etc. We are looking for data that is already available to call centers. We are not asking the provider to produce new data that call centers don't already collect. It would be helpful in the response to the RFP to explain what data you would be able to provide based on current call center operations.
Is there an existing call center quality assurance program?	Yes, but CSB does not have details.
Would the provider's CSP users be able to pull data from the system?	Yes
Does CSB want the application to be formatted as one long narrative, or address question-by-question?	Question-by-question
Many of the categories in the budget template seem to be not applicable.	That's true - this is the budget format for all providers and much of it won't be applicable to a homeless hotline project. Under revenue, fill out the CSB line with the value specified in the RFP. Under expenses, fill out the first column for ongoing annual costs and the second column for one-time start-up costs. Fill out staffing costs on the second tab of the spreadsheet and it will automatically transfer to the correct line on the budget. CSB does not need salary and benefit information for each individual - just as an aggregate by type of position. If there are any questions about what category to use for a particular cost, contact Heather Notter (hnotter@csb.org).
Is there anything else applicants should know about what's important to CSB?	CSB is looking for a partnership. The homeless hotline is the front door to our system, and we want to make it function well for the people who need shelter. The hotline has high visibility throughout the community and we have to live up to the community's high expectations. We are looking for a responsive, collaborative partner that will help the system constantly innovate and improve.
What about virtual workers?	CSB is fine with having virtual workers as long as privacy and security standards are met. It doesn't matter to CSB how the provider staffs and trains employees, as long as there is a consistent, high-quality response.
Do referrals to other providers and services go through CSP?	No, but CSB would help the provider develop references and resources for diverting and redirecting people who don't need shelter to the appropriate program.

What is the implementation/transition period for the new vendor? It states we would start to take calls on July 1, but what is the date that we would start working with CSB to collaborate on processes/procedures, etc. Would that be April after the award announcement or May after funding approval?	The work with CSB on processes and procedures would be after the award announcement in April.
How did CSB come up with the 5 minute limit for caller wait time?	5 minutes represents the outer limit of CSB's tolerance for wait times. CSB welcomes and will happily entertain proposals for lower wait times.
Is there a guideline for the expected diversion rate?	The current goal for diverting people who call the hotline is 30% for families and 25% for single adults.
Are there any parameters for ramp up costs?	No because CSB doesn't know what entities would need to ramp up. Please be as clear and thorough as possible in the description of ramp up costs so that CSB can fully understand what would be required.
Does CSB find that callers respond to current IVR prompts?	We don't know. We are thinking there may be a role for IVR prompts for the short calls that respond to a caller inquiry about waitlist position, but we would look to the proposer to help determine what would be most effective.
Are there physical security requirements?	No, because clients would not be coming to the provider's location.
Do all of the Program Review and Certification Standards referenced in the RFP apply to the hotline?	No. The last column in each set of standards clarifies program applicability. Look for the standards that apply to all programs and those that apply to the homeless hotline/coordinated point of access (CPOA).
Would CSB require live access to the data captured in the dashboards?	No, CSB does not need granular access to live call center data.
What are the requirements for use of CSB's data system?	The requirements are available in the Program Review and Certification M Standards, referenced in the RFP and available on CSB's website here: https://www.csb.org/providers/monitoring .
Is the program subject to HIPAA requirements?	No
Is the data collected on paper or in the web-based data system in real time?	In the data system, real time.
What are the system requirements to operate the data system?	There are no specific system requirements. All of CSB's current partner agencies can easily access the system and none have had problems with system requirements.
Is a trunk activity report available for the current hotline?	No
Will the phone number for the Homeless Hotline need to stay the same?	Yes
Can the provider add a 614 number in addition to the toll-free number?	Yes
How many new intakes (clients who did not access the system before) does the hotline process each month?	CSB will try to generate and provide this data.
How many callers are repeat callers?	For families it's approximately 40%, for single men approximately 60%, and for single women approximately 50%.

How does the wait list for single adults work?	In non-overflow (non-winter) months, the waitlist for single adults is first come, first serve. Individuals on the waitlist call back to the hotline each day to retain their place on the waitlist. When shelter beds open up, the hotline calls the individuals on the waitlist in order to offer beds.
Does the system usually fill all shelter beds every day?	CSB tracks open beds every day to monitor the efficiency of the system. Sometimes beds are left open because people who had a bed reserved don't show up to the shelter and it may be too late in the day for the hotline to find someone who can get to the shelter and take the bed that night. CSB and shelters have experimented with over-booking in the past to address this issue, but it was difficult to implement. CSB is willing to re-visit over-booking.
Can CSB alter the fields in HMIS to include information on waitlist call backs?	Yes
How many shelter beds are in the system?	There are 114 family units, 431 beds for men, and 201 beds for women. During winter overflow season, the system adds 236 beds.
What kind of triage does the hotline need to do?	The system prioritizes families, pregnant women, and veterans for immediate shelter, year-round. During winter overflow, single adults also always receive shelter. Single adults are waitlisted for beds during non-overflow months.
Can dedicated hotline personnel resources be supplemented with part-time and cross-trained employees?	Yes, and CSB encourages this approach to manage personnel and variations in call volume.
Will the hotline contract be a not-to-exceed contract?	Yes. Currently the contract is reimbursement-based, with invoices submitted to CSB monthly.
Can the provider propose a different payment structure than reimbursement?	Yes