



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS **Customer Service System**

Posting Date: April 4, 2022

Response Submission Deadline: **EXTENDED THROUGH 3:00 EST p.m. on May 4, 2022.**

NOTE TO RESPONDENTS:

Please be advised that **all** submissions (including those not selected for engagement) may be made available to the public on request pursuant to the Rhode Island Access to Public Records Act, Chapter 2 of Title 38 of the Rhode Island General Laws (the “APRA”) upon award of a contract(s). As a result, respondents are advised not to include information that they deem proprietary or confidential or that constitutes a trade secret.

INTRODUCTION

Through this Request for Proposals (“RFP”), the Rhode Island Housing and Mortgage Finance Corporation (“RIHousing”) seeks proposals from qualified firms to provide a customer service system that allows for intake of customer service inquiries on the website and a back end system to track, respond, and report out on inquiries.

INSTRUCTIONS

Proposals must be submitted via email to: **Stacy Wasserman, Innovation Program Manager at swasserman@rihousing.com** no later than the response submission deadline set forth above.

Proposals that are not received by the response submission deadline or that do not adhere to the submission instructions described herein shall not be accepted or considered by RIHousing.

Proposals should be concise and adhere to the word count applicable to each section of this Request for Proposals (“RFP”). Proposals should be presented on business letterhead and include all attachments, certifications (including the Submissions Certification at [Attachment A](#)), and work samples (as applicable). Please note that failure to provide any information, certification, or document requested in this RFP may cause your submission not to be reviewed or considered by RIHousing.

RIHousing may invite one or more finalists to make presentations, including customized demonstrations of requested products.



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SCOPE OF WORK

Please see the Scope of Work as provided on Attachment B.

ITEMS TO BE INCLUDED WITH YOUR PROPOSAL

Section A: General Firm Information (Total word limit: 500 words)

1. Provide a brief description of your firm, including but not limited to the following:
 - a. Name of the principal(s) of the firm.
 - b. Name, business telephone number and business email address of a representative of the firm authorized to discuss your proposal.
 - c. Locations of all offices of the firm.
 - d. Number of employees of the firm.

RIHousing requests that the contact information provided in response to this subsection (1) be strictly limited to business addresses, telephone numbers, and email addresses to protect any personal information from being made available to the public pursuant to APRA.

Section B: Experience and Resources (Total word limit: 3500 words)

SUBMISSION CHECK LIST

1. Describe your firm and its capabilities. In particular, support your capacity to perform the Scope of Work detailed in Attachment B.

2. Indicate which principals and associates from your firm would be involved in providing services to RIHousing. Provide appropriate background information for each such person and identify their responsibilities.

3. If applicable, please indicate the name of any subcontractors that would be involved in providing services to your firm and to RIHousing. Provide appropriate background information for each person or entity, identify the person's responsibilities and outline their capabilities.

4. Provide a detailed list of at least three references, including a contact name and business telephone number for organizations or businesses for whom you have performed similar work.

5. Identify individuals in your firm with multi-lingual skills, who are available to assist with communication in languages other than English. Please identify the language(s).



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- 6. Describe your firm’s information security systems and the steps that your firm takes to safeguard client communication, confidential information, and client data. Include in your response whether your firm performs penetration testing, your firm’s encryption methods, and whether client data is stored onshore or offshore.
- 7. Describe the accessibility features of the software including, but not limited to, those relating to the public-facing portal. Include in your response whether the software meets the highest success level (AAA) of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1, as may be amended from time to time.
- 8. Please provide copies of your firm’s data security plans and Soc 2 compliance reports. [The report will not count toward the word count for this section.]

Section C: Fee Structure (Total word limit: 500 words)

The cost of services is one of the factors that will be considered in awarding this contract. The information requested in this section is required to support the reasonableness of your fees.

- 1. Please provide a cost proposal for providing the Scope of Work at Attachment B. RIHousing anticipates a multi-year agreement, with an initial 2-year agreement, with an option to renew for an additional two years. Please provide pricing broken out for year one through year four.
- 2. Please provide any other fee information applicable to the engagement that has not been previously covered that you wish to bring to the attention of RIHousing.

Section D: Affirmative Action Plan and Minority Owned Business/Women Owned Business

- 1. RIHousing encourages the participation of persons of color, women, persons with disabilities and members of other federally and State-protected classes. Describe your firm’s affirmative action program and activities. Include the number and percentage of members of federally and State-protected classes who are either principals or senior managers in your firm, the number and percentage of members of federally and State-protected classes in your firm who will work on RIHousing’s engagement and, if applicable, a copy of your Minority- or Women-Owned Business Enterprise state certification.

Section E: Miscellaneous (Total word limit: 1000 words)

- 1. Discuss any topics not covered in this RFP that you would like to bring to RIHousing’s attention.



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Section F. Certifications

- All applicants must respond to and provide documentation as outlined in the Request for Proposals Submission Certifications at Attachment A.

EVALUATION AND SELECTION

A selection committee consisting of RIHousing employees will review all proposals that meet the requirements set forth in the “Instructions” section of this RFP and make a selection based on the following factors:

- Professional capacity to undertake the Scope of Work (as evaluated by reference in Section B: Experience and Resources);
- Proposed fee structure (as evaluated by reference in Section C: Fee Structure);
- Ability to perform within time and budget constraints (as evaluated by reference in Section B);
- Evaluation of proposed project approach (as contained in the Attachment B-Scope of Work. Section B);
- Previous work experience and performance with RIHousing and/or similar organizations (as provided in Section B: Experience and Resources, subsection 3);
- Recommendations by references (as provided in Section B: Experience and Resources, subsection 3);
- Firm minority status and affirmative action program or activities (as requested in Section D: Affirmative Action Plan and Minority Owned Business/Women Owned Business)
- Foreign language capabilities of the firm (as provided in Section B: Experience and Resources, subsection 5 and in Section I. Services to be Provided in the Scope of Work);
- Other pertinent information submitted.

By this RFP, RIHousing has not committed itself to undertake the work set forth herein. RIHousing reserves the right to reject any and all proposals, to rebid the original or amended scope of services and to enter into negotiations with one or more respondents. RIHousing reserves the right to make those decisions after its receipt of responses. RIHousing’s decision on these matters is final.

For additional information contact: swasserman@rihousing.com. All questions will be answered on RIHousing.com/rfps-rfqs.



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Attachment A

Requests for Proposals Submission Certifications

Please respond to **all** items below and include it in your response to this RFP. Be sure to include any additional information in the space provided or as an attachment as needed. Please ensure that any attachments refer to the appropriate item by name (i.e., “Conflict of Interest,” “Major State Decision Maker,” etc.)

Total word limit for Sections A and B: 500 words

Section A: Conflicts of Interest

1. Identify any conflict of interest that may arise as a result of business activities or ventures by your firm and associates of your firm, employees, or subcontractors as a result of any individual’s status as a member of the board of directors of any organization likely to interact with RIHousing. **If none, check below.**

None

2. Describe how your firm will handle actual and or potential conflicts of interest (*please include in your proposal or attach a sheet with this information*).

Section B: Litigation, Proceedings, Investigations

1. Identify any material litigation, administrative proceedings, or investigations in which your firm is currently involved. **If none, check below.**

None

2. Identify any material litigation, administrative proceedings, or investigations to which your firm or any of its principals, partners, associates, subcontractors, or support staff was a party, that has been finally adjudicated or settled within the past two (2) years. **If none, check below.**

None

Section C: Certifications

1. RIHousing insists upon full compliance with Chapter 27 of Title 17 of the Rhode Island General Laws, Reporting of Political Contributions by State Vendors. This law requires State Vendors entering into contracts to provide services to an agency such as RIHousing, for the aggregate sum of \$5,000 or more, to file an affidavit with the State Board of Elections



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concerning reportable political contributions. The affidavit must state whether the State Vendor (and any related parties as defined in the law) has, within 24 months preceding the date of the contract, contributed an aggregate amount in excess of \$250 within a calendar year to any general officer, any candidate for general office, or any political party. **Please acknowledge your understanding below.**

I have read and understand the requirements of Chapter 27 of Title 17 of the Rhode Island General Laws, Reporting of Political Contributions by State Vendors.

2. Does any Rhode Island “Major State Decision-maker,” as defined below, or the spouse or dependent child of such person, hold (i) a ten percent or greater equity interest, or (ii) a Five Thousand Dollar or greater cash interest in this business?

For purposes of this question, “Major State Decision-maker” means:

(i) All general officers; and all executive or administrative head or heads of any state executive agency enumerated in § 42-6-1 as well as the executive or administrative head or heads of state quasi-public corporations, whether appointed or serving as an employee. The phrase “executive or administrative head or heads” shall include anyone serving in the positions of director, executive director, deputy director, assistant director, executive counsel, or chief of staff;

(ii) All members of the general assembly and the executive or administrative head or heads of a state legislative agency, whether appointed or serving as an employee. The phrase “executive or administrative head or heads” shall include anyone serving in the positions of director, executive director, deputy director, assistant director, executive counsel, or chief of staff;

(iii) All members of the state judiciary and all state magistrates and the executive or administrative head or heads of a state judicial agency, whether appointed or serving as an employee. The phrase “executive or administrative head or heads” shall include anyone serving in the positions of director, executive director, deputy director, assistant director, executive counsel, chief of staff or state court administrator.

Please indicate your response below.

Yes

If your answer is “Yes,” please identify the Major State Decision-maker, specify the nature of their ownership interest, and provide a copy of the annual financial disclosure required to be filed with the Rhode Island Ethics Commission pursuant to R.I.G.L. §§36-14-16, 17 and 18.

No



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3. In the course of providing goods or services to RIHousing, the selected respondent may receive certain personal information specific to RIHousing customer(s) including, without limitation, customer names and addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses, dates of birth, loan numbers, account numbers, social security numbers, driver's license or identification card numbers, employment and income information, photographic likenesses, tax returns, or other personal or financial information (hereinafter collectively referred to as the "Personal Information"). The maintenance of the Personal Information in strict confidence and the confinement of its use to RIHousing are of vital importance to RIHousing.

Please certify below that in the event your firm is selected:

- (i) any Personal Information disclosed to your firm by RIHousing or which your firm acquires as a result of its services hereunder will be regarded by your firm as confidential, and shall not be copied or disclosed to any third party, unless RIHousing has given its prior written consent thereto; and
- (ii) your firm agrees to take all reasonable measures to (a) ensure the security and confidentiality of the Personal Information, (b) protect against any anticipated threats or hazards to the security or integrity of the Personal Information, and (c) maintain reasonable security procedures and practices appropriate to your firm's size, the nature of the Personal Information, and the purpose for which the Personal Information was collected in order to protect the Personal Information from unauthorized access, use, modification, destruction or disclosure; and
- (iii) when discarding the Personal Information, destroying it in a commercially reasonable manner such that no third party can view or recreate the information, electronically or otherwise.

These provisions, which implement the requirements of the Rhode Island Identity Theft Protection Act, R.I.G.L. § 11-49.2 et seq., will also be incorporated into the final contract with the selected respondent(s). In addition, if selected, your firm may be requested to provide a copy of its information security plan.

I certify that in the event our firm is selected, we will comply with the Personal Information and Security guidelines noted above.

4. Your firm's president, chairman or CEO must certify below that (i) no member of your firm has made inquiries or contacts with respect to this RFP other than in an email or written communication to Stacy Wasserman at swasserman@rihousing.com seeking clarification on the Scope of Work set forth in this proposal, from the date of this RFP through the date of your proposal, (ii) no member of your firm will make any such inquiry or contact until after April 4, 2022, (iii) all information in the proposal is true and correct to the best of your knowledge, (iv) no member of your firm gave anything of monetary value or promise of future



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employment to a RIHousing employee or Commissioner, or a relative of the same, based on any understanding that such person's action or judgment will be influenced, and (v) your firm is in full compliance with Chapter 27 of Title 17 of the Rhode Island General Laws, Reporting of Political Contributions by State Vendors.

I certify that no member of our firm has made or will make any such inquiries or contacts; all information supplied is true and correct; no member of our firm has provided anything of value to influence RIHousing; and our firm is in compliance with applicable political contribution reporting.

President, Chairman or CEO (*print*): _____

Signature: _____

Firm Name: _____



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Attachment B

Scope of Work

I. Services to be Provided

RIHousing seeks to engage a firm to provide a front end and back-end customer service system and experience. As the state's housing finance agency, we provide assistance to buy, rent and build homes. In 2020 alone, we provided \$395M in loans to help 1,593 Rhode Islanders buy a home and provided loan servicing for over 29,000 single family mortgages; supported almost 18,000 households with federal rental assistance; and developed or preserved 1,100 affordable homes.

The agency consists of four divisions that this system would mainly, but not exclusively, support: Loan Servicing, Homeownership, Leased Housing and Rental Services, and Development. These divisions support over 25 individual programs or topic areas that have individual customer service needs, with over 50 staff that may need varying levels of access to the system. We anticipate customers will fill out a customer facing webform integrated into RIHousing's website that would direct the inquiry to the correct staff person. We anticipate multiple question levels will be needed to ensure the inquiry gets to the right staff person to handle the request (please see **Attachment C** for more information). Inquiries may also be received over the phone, which staff would manually enter into the system.

A number of programs have federal compliance requirements for responding to inquiries in a certain timeframe, tracking information and reporting out via Excel and PDF.

The system must have dashboard capabilities to show inquiries based on different data fields, such as division, type of inquiry, staff member, dates, etc. The system must be able to provide automated reports and sort data on a granular level. The system must allow for at least five standard reports to be defined at configuration time.

The system must have SLA capabilities. Once an inquiry has been received, the system needs to notify the appropriate staff person via email. Customers would receive an acknowledgement email. Staff need to track multiple data fields, all communication and resolution. System must be able to escalate inquiries, provide automatic notifications to additional staff members if responses are overdue, integrate with Outlook email, and integrate with social media, including Facebook and Twitter.

While not required, the system would ideally integrate with Yardi Voyager, HDS and Smartsheet, and possibly Encompass, Black Knight, Neighborly, DevConnect and Prolink.

The customer portal must, at a minimum, be accessible in Spanish. Ideally, the system would be able to translate both Spanish and English via email to support staff and customers that do not speak the same language. Ideally, the program would have the capability of translating, or working with other translation systems, into additional languages as needed.



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II. Project Schedule

All program and departmental meetings should be complete within 6-8 weeks and the system should be up and running within 4 months of engagement. Please explain any variation to this proposed schedule.

III. Project Approach

The goal of this engagement is to improve agency customer service and meet regulatory requirements for customer responses and agency reporting. This system will provide a way to track whether staff are 1) responding in an appropriate timeframe, 2) responding in an appropriate manner, and 3) resolving the inquiry.

The chosen firm will be expected to meet with each program within each division to understand their current processes and specific needs prior to starting implementation. The firm will need to do the initial training of all staff on how to use the system.

Firms must identify all partners that will be brought on to implement the system, including individuals and their roles, and any subcontractors.



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Attachment C

Example of Levels Needed for Customer Portal

I am a:

Homeowner

I am contacting RIHousing because: (dropdown)

- Mortgage question or concern
- Homeowner’s or Flood Insurance question or concern
- Real Estate Taxes question or concern
- Refinancing
- Received a mediation notice
- Interested in Foreclosure Prevention Counseling
- Madeline Walker Program
- Deed restriction question
- LeadSafe Homes Program
- Homeowner Assistance Fund

Homebuyer

I am contacting RIHousing because: (dropdown)

- Interested in buying a home
- Homebuyer education
- LeadSafe Homes Program
- Program or guidelines question

Landlord/Property Management or Owner

I am contacting RIHousing because: (dropdown)

- Housing Choice Voucher Program question or concern
- Rent Relief RI
- LeadSafe Homes Program
- Homeowner Assistance Fund

Renter

I am contacting RIHousing because: (dropdown)

- Housing Choice Voucher Program question or concern
- Rent Relief RI
- Continuum of Care question or concern
- Concern regarding property management or landlord
- Looking for a subsidized apartment or at-risk of becoming homeless
- LeadSafe Homes Program

Developer/Contractor

I am contacting RIHousing because: (dropdown)

- Letters of eligibility
- HOME/HTF/Housing bond financing



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- Interested in learning about RIHousing financing products/building affordable housing
- Section 3 compliance/Davis Bacon
- Concern regarding property under construction
- Monitoring agent inquiry
- Deed restriction question

Other

I am contacting RIHousing because: (dropdown)

- APRA request
- Media inquiry
- Elected official constituent inquiry

Examples of types of sub-levels needed

Homeowner [BUTTON]

I am contacting RIHousing because:

- Mortgage question or concern
 - Struggling to pay my mortgage
 1. Is your mortgage with RIHousing or another lending institution?
 - RIHousing
 - Other lending institution
 2. Please describe your issue
 3. Name, Address, City, State, email, phone, loan number
 - Route to Loan Servicing
 - Escrow
 - Received a mediation notice
 - Received a foreclosure notice
 - Other
- Refinancing
- Interested in financial counseling
- Madeline Walker Program
- Deed restriction question
- LeadSafe Homes Program
- Homeowner Assistance Fund

Renter [BUTTON]

I am contacting RIHousing because:

- Housing Choice Voucher Program question or concern

Are you contacting us regarding?

- Centralized Waitlist
- Family Self-Sufficiency Program
- New RIHousing voucher holder with a question or concern
- Existing RIHousing voucher holder with a question or concern
 1. Is this regarding a question or concern with your unit or landlord?
 - Yes



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- No
 - 2. Have you contacted your landlord with your question or concern?
 - No
 - Yes, no response
 - 3. Please describe your issue
 - 4. Name, Address, Phone, Email
 - Route to HCVP
- Rent Relief RI
- Continuum of Care question or concern
- Concern regarding property management or landlord
 - 1. Development name (drop down)
 - 315 Park
 - Amherst Apartments
 - Barrington Cove
 - Brook Village
 - Festival Field
 - Lincoln Lofts
 - 2. Issue (drop down)
 - Physical condition
 - Maintenance
 - Uninhabitable unit
 - Neighbor Conflict
 - Other
 - 3. Please describe your issue
 - 4. Address
 - 5. Unit number
 - 6. Name, Phone Number, Email address
 - Route to asset management
- Looking for an apartment or at-risk of becoming homeless
- LeadSafe Homes Program