



## **Request for Proposals**

### **211 Maryland: Information and Referral Services**

**Maryland Information Network  
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Columbia, Maryland 21046**

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## I. KEY INFORMATION SUMMARY

<b>Request for Proposal</b>	211 Maryland: Information & Referral Services
<b>RFP Issue Date:</b>	March 20, 2023
<b>RFP Questions:</b>	<p>All questions related to this RFP should be submitted in advance to <a href="mailto:proposals@211md.org">proposals@211md.org</a> no later than close of business April 2, 2023 at 5:00 p.m.</p> <p>The questions and answers will be emailed to all individuals who submitted questions. If you would like to be emailed this document but do not have a question, please email: <a href="mailto:proposals@211md.org">proposals@211md.org</a></p> <p><b>Questions received after the above date will not be answered.</b></p>
<b>Pre-Proposal Conference:</b>	April 3, 2023, at 1:00 p.m.
<b>Monday, April 17<sup>th</sup></b>	Notice of Intent Due at 5:00 p.m.
<b>Proposal Submission Deadline:</b>	May 8, 2023, at 5:00 p.m.
<b>Anticipated Notice of Award:</b>	June 5, 2023
<b>Anticipated Contract Start:</b>	July 1, 2023
<b>Proposals are to be emailed to:</b>	Attn: RFP 211 Maryland <a href="mailto:proposals@211md.org">proposals@211md.org</a>

## II. PURPOSE

Maryland Information Network is seeking nonprofit partner organizations to operate the 211 Maryland Virtual Contact Center to (1) provide statewide information and referral (**I & R**) services to 211 users regarding a full range of health and human service needs.

### A. OVERVIEW OF MARYLAND INFORMATION NETWORK (MIN)

Maryland Information Network, 211 Maryland Inc. serves as the central connector to health and human services and disaster response for the state of Maryland. It is codified to coordinate and manage a statewide information and referral (I & R) system for health and human services. This also includes management of a comprehensive, statewide community resource database. Maryland Information Network has developed a Virtual Contact Center that consists of a single cloud-based phone system (NICE InContact) and a customer relationship management (CRM) system (iCarol) linked to Maryland Information Network's statewide resource database.

### B. OVERVIEW 211 Information & Referral (I & R)

Maryland Information Network is positioning itself as the key source of unmet need data that informs strategic decision making for health and human service resource development in Maryland. It seeks to facilitate collaboration among providers to improve health indicators and address inequities. Partners of Maryland Information Network understand the critical role they play in providing quality customer service, growing, and maintaining the designated 211 statewide resource database and collecting quality caller demographic and need data.

### C. SCOPE OF SERVICE

#### **211 Information & Referral**

The selected applicant(s) will operate the Virtual Contact Center to provide 211 callers with information and referral services regarding the full range of human services, including but not limited to:

- Housing and shelter;
- utility assistance;
- veteran's services;
- aging and disability
- immigration services
- emergency preparedness & response.

The virtual contact center will operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year to provide I&R services to Marylanders that dial 2-1-1 or otherwise reach out to 211 for health and human

service resource support. The Virtual Contact Center is estimated to receive 200,000 contacts statewide during each of the funding years.

The applicant(s) selected will demonstrate:

1. A minimum of 2 years of experience operating a call center.
2. Accreditation and compliance with national information and referral or crisis accrediting body.
3. Established protocols for providing information and referral services to persons with limited English proficiency, deaf and hard of hearing, or other accessibility needs.
4. The ability to provide high quality customer service to callers with an emphasis on needs assessment and referral in a timely manner.
5. The ability to provide (or partner to provide) staff coverage twenty-four (24) hours a day, seven (7) days a week to answer health and human service calls.
6. The ability to provide supervision during all shifts to support call specialist staff designated to the Virtual Contact Center.
7. The ability to assess mental health and/or substance use needs and refer (transfer) to appropriate call specialists per established protocols.
8. Willingness to work in collaboration with Maryland Information Network to develop protocols for continuous quality improvement.
9. Employment of call specialist staff with, at minimum, a high school diploma/GED and two (2) years of work experience in health and human service or a related field.
10. Capacity to provide language assistance other than English to callers that so require by providing bilingual staff of interpretation line.

**D. Key Deliverables**

1. Answer 80% of calls within 90 seconds.
2. Provide routine training for call specialist staff on customer service, diversity, equity inclusion, and cultural competency.

**III. OVERVIEW OF RFP**

**A. CONTRACT FUNDING AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The contract period for this proposal is July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024. The contract period will renew for an additional one-year period from July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025, if funding is available.

As of the writing of this RFP, funding is awarded on a quarterly reimbursement schedule. Maryland Information Network continues to advocate for advance payments to support the business operations of its partners. If advance award payments are allowable, Maryland Information Network will amend the payment method of the selected applicant(s).

## **B. CONTRACTOR RESPONSIBILITIES**

The selected applicant(s) will be responsible for:

- Submitting quarterly financial reports.
- Submitting monthly program reports that are not otherwise available through iCarol.
- Utilizing the Maryland Information Network 211 Resource Database to document new and update existing community resource records in the format designated by Maryland Information Network.
- Receiving and answering 211 calls through Maryland Information Network's designated phone system.
- Documenting caller information in the CRM system designated by Maryland Information Network, capturing data elements required for system reporting.

## **C. MARYLAND INFORMATION NETWORK RESPONSIBILITIES**

Under the proposed funding agreement, Maryland Information Network will be responsible for:

- Providing strategic leadership and administrative oversight of the entire 211 Maryland system.
- Developing policies and protocols for the 211 Maryland system to ensure streamlined operations.
- Providing technical assistance around operation of the 211 Virtual Contact Center, including support of interpretation systems when requested.
- Monitoring quality assurance data and reporting and providing feedback to designated staff persons.
- Promoting 211 Maryland as a statewide resource through regional and statewide partnerships.
- Working cooperatively to solve any issues that may arise. Being available for general support/providing timely responses to requests or other issues.
- Communicating timely about program initiatives, events, or marketing efforts that may impact 211 call volume.

**D. RFP TIMELINE**

Date*	Event
Monday, March 20 <sup>th</sup>	Issue Request for Proposal
Tuesday, April 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Pre-proposal Conference
Monday, April 17 <sup>th</sup>	Notice of Intent Due
Monday, May 8 <sup>th</sup>	Proposal Submission Deadline
Monday, June 5 <sup>th</sup>	Anticipated Notice of Funding Award Issued
Saturday, July 1 <sup>st</sup>	FY24 Contract Start Date

*\*Subject to change based on timeline of Maryland Information Network's funding award*

**E. PROPOSAL GUIDELINES & ELEMENTS**

Applicants should ensure they submit their proposal according to the following guidelines:

- The proposal, not including attachments, should not exceed 10 pages.
- The proposal and attachments should be sent in PDF format to [proposals@211md.org](mailto:proposals@211md.org).
- Attachments to include the most recent:
  - Audited financial statements
  - IRS Form 990
  - Board approved budget for the full organization
  - Certification of 501(c)3 status
- The proposal should address the following elements:

**General Qualification Statement – 25 “General” points**

1. How long has your call center been in operation?
2. How many phone lines do you manage? How many calls and what types of calls do you answer annually?
3. Who is your accrediting body? When is your accreditation due for renewal? What barriers exist that could affect renewal (if applicable)?
4. Describe what you believe to be your organization's core competencies?

**General Approach – 35 "General" points**

1. Describe your experience supporting a Virtual Contact Center as described above and managing the expected call volume.
2. How will you ensure you are providing adequate coverage and services to operate the Virtual Contact Center?

3. Describe how you will provide services as outlined in the Scope of Services section above.

**I&R Staffing – 25 “I&R” points**

1. Provide a description of how you will staff and provide supervision for the Virtual Contact Center identifying key staff and their roles, and call specialist educational/training background.
2. Describe how your organization approaches ongoing staff training, call monitoring and call quality.

**F. I&R Itemized Budget and Budget Narrative – 15 “I&R” points**

Provide a program budget and narrative that explains the proposed annual cost in detail per Tier level volume of calls. Special emphasis should highlight economies of scale achieved at higher Tier volumes. The budget narrative should be included in the body of your proposal, not as an appendix. Vendors are invited to propose costs for one or more Tier levels as appropriate for their capacity.

Tier Level	Annual Call Volume	Proposed Annual Cost
Level 1	Less than 10,000	\$
Level 2	10,001-50,000	\$
Level 3	50,001-100,000	\$
Level 4	100,001 –200,000	\$

**For each proposed Tier Level include:**

- Program Budget – Draft a program budget with a description and justification for each line item.
- Budget Narrative – Describe and justify each line item in the program budget, including assumptions that show how you will achieve the proposed budget.