**Cecile E. Young, Executive Commissioner**

**Request for Applications (RFA)**
**for**
**2-1-1 Texas Information and Referral Network Operations**
**RFA No. HHS0009792**

**Exhibit A, Grant Requirements**

## SECTION I: AREA INFORMATION CENTER OPERATIONS

### 1 OVERVIEW

The Health and Human Services Commission administers the Texas Information and Referral Network (**HHSC/TIRN**), which is comprised of 25 Area Information Center (**AIC**) regions that provide general information and referral (**I&R**) services to individuals in Texas (See **Exhibit E, AIC Regions and Estimated Funding Amounts**). Each multi-county regional AIC is responsible for collecting, providing, and updating accurate, well-organized, and accessible information from state and local health and human services programs.

Individuals and families seeking I&R can contact their local AIC by dialing "2-1-1," which is the national abbreviated dialing code for free access to health and human services I&R. The short code of 2-1-1 is an easy-to-remember and universally recognizable number that connects individuals with appropriate community-based organizations and government agencies, with the goal of encouraging prevention and fostering self-sufficiency.

Individuals can also access information through the TIRN Network by visiting the public website at: https://www.211texas.org/.

In addition to providing comprehensive I&R services to all counties in their regions, AICs play an integral role in the *Governor's Homeland Security Strategic Plan for 2020-2025* by providing information to the public in the event of a disaster or emergency.

The 2-1-1 TIRN Network is committed to continuous improvement of the efficiency and quality of services. In addition to providing services during normal operations and public emergency events, AICs also participate in special initiatives and collaborative projects that serve Texas residents. The successful Applicant must have demonstrated capacity to expand their programming to accommodate these types of initiatives.

The Applicant must possess and maintain the knowledge, skills, experience, and abilities necessary to deliver contracted services, achieve contract outcomes, satisfy technical requirements, and meet all required responsibilities. The successful Applicant will demonstrate the capacity to provide all of the following AIC core functions:

A. Data Resource Management
B. Information and Referral Services
C. Disaster Preparedness and Response
D. Focused Initiatives
E. Outreach Activities

**An Applicant may choose to submit applications for more than one region by submitting a separate application for each region**; however, the Applicant must be able to meet the following requirements:

A. A physical location must be maintained in at least one of the AIC regions for which applications are being submitted; and
B. A permanent staff person must be located in the region(s) where the Applicant does not have a physical location.

# 2 AIC INFRASTRUCTURE

## 2.1 Physical Location and Hours of Operation

AICs must be fully operational and able to respond to inquiries 24 hours a day, seven (7) days a week, year-round.

AICs may choose to subaward with other centers in the Texas 2-1-1 network to fulfill coverage requirements during overnight hours, weekends, holidays, office or agency relocations, conferences, trainings, meetings, and other periods of extended offline time; however, offline requests and any applicable subawarding arrangement must be submitted in writing and approved by HHSC/TIRN.

Additionally, AICs that subaward for offline coverage must ensure services provided by the subawarded center meet or exceed the AIC's service level. AICs must conduct random monitoring of recorded calls taken by the subawarded center to verify call quality and address any issues that may arise. Evidence of quality monitoring activities must be documented and made available to HHSC/TIRN upon request.

## 2.2 Technical Requirements

The Successful Applicant must provide certain technical equipment and have the capacity to support some aspects of the telecommunications activity, which allows the HHSC/TIRN to function as a system.

### 2.2.1 Required Equipment, Materials, and Support

The table below shows the equipment, materials, and other support to be provided by HHSC/TIRN, as well as, the requirements of the Successful Applicant.

| HHSC/TIRN will provide: | AIC must provide: |
|---|---|
| 1. A Router / Voice Gateway | 1. A broadband connection to the Internet with a firewall to prevent non-trusted activity |
| 2. Uninterruptible Power Supply (**UPS**) to power all HHSC/TIRN-supplied equipment, which is the only equipment allowed on the HHSC/TIRN-supplied UPS | 2. A dedicated electrical outlet for the HHSC/TIRN-supplied UPS. The specifications for this outlet depends on site-specific requirements, but could range from National Electrical Manufacturers Association (**NEMA**) 5-15P to NEMA L6-30 |
| 3. An Ethernet Switch (if required based on HHSC/TIRN evaluation) | 3. Category 5 (**Cat 5**) or better cable connection from the demarcation point to the HHSC/TIRN rack of gear |
| 4. Voice-over Internet Protocol phones for staff to conduct HHSC/TIRN business | 4. A dedicated server room that must remain locked at all times, be accessible only by select agency staff, and be used only for server and other equipment storage |

| HHSC/TIRN will provide: | AIC must provide: |
|---|---|
| 5. Public Switched Telephone Network (**PSTN**) lines to support 2-1-1 call needs. The number of lines will be determined by HHSC/TIRN staff | 5. Adequate ventilation and cooling in the server room<br>a) The temperature of the room must be maintained between 60 and 80 degrees Fahrenheit at all times.<br>b) The temperature and humidity may be monitored remotely. |
| 6. A patch panel for AIC stations | 6. A direct employee or contracted employee to provide network and computer administration (**IT**) (see Section 3.1.5 **Information Technology Support Staff – Responsibilities and Qualifications**) |
| 7. A standard rack to hold gear | 7. A firewall configured to allow activity as defined by HHSC/TIRN. The firewall must permit e-mail from HHSC addresses and those of HHSC/TIRN vendors |
| 8. Sufficient bandwidth (through a Virtual Private Network [**VPN**] or other means) to handle call volume and other HHSC/TIRN needs | 8. Phones with Ethernet wiring either directly or through a patch panel to the HHSC/TIRN-supplied router or switches (HHSC/TIRN will not allow additional switches to extend the reach to other phones. The exception is any switches supplied by HHSC/TIRN for ESEC "formerly known as Warm Centers".) |
| 9. Technical support for HHSC/TIRN equipment | 9. Computers with virus protection software that must be able to de-select the scanning of network attached servers and comply with other business requirements of HHSC/TIRN. Browser software on the computers must allow for pop-ups |

AICs are not permitted to access/change/modify or repurpose any hardware or equipment supplied by HHSC/TIRN unless directed to do so, in writing, by HHSC/TIRN. Additionally, wireless connectivity to the HHSC/TIRN-supplied network, router, or switch is prohibited. At the end of the contract term, all HHSC/TIRN issued equipment must be returned within 60 business days of expiration of contract, unless otherwise specified by HHSC/TIRN.

### 2.2.2 Computer and Software Requirements

Below are the current HHSC/TIRN-defined computer and software requirements, which AICs will adhere to throughout the contract term. Due to the evolving nature of technology, these requirements are subject to update by HHSC/TIRN at any time.

| Computer/Software Item | Requirements |
|---|---|
| Platform/Image Core | • CPU: Minimum 2.0GHz (Recommended 3.2GHz+)<br>• Memory: Minimum 2 GB (Recommended 4GB) |

| Computer/Software Item | Requirements |
|---|---|
| | • Disk Space for Desktop and Process Analytics: 10 MB for the client installation files and 100 MB to ensure processes run when there is no network.<br>• Monitor: Minimum resolution: 1280 x 800 (Recommended resolution: 1280 x 1024 or higher)<br>• Sound Card: Sound card, plus speakers and/or headphones<br>• Video Card: Minimum 32MB RAM<br>• Peripherals: Keyboard, Mouse, CD-ROM drive (or access to a shared network drive)<br>• Network 10-100 MBPS 10-BaseT LAN Card or faster |
| Operating System | • Microsoft Windows® 7 (32-bit or 64-bit)<br>• Microsoft Windows® 10 (32-bit or 64-bit)<br>• Mac OS X |
| Browser | • Microsoft Internet Explorer® 7.0<br>• Microsoft Internet Explorer® 8.0<br>• Microsoft Internet Explorer® 9.0<br>• Microsoft Internet Explorer® 10.0 (only for Finesse 10.5 ES1 or higher)<br>• Microsoft Internet Explorer® 11.0<br>• Firefox<br>• Microsoft Edge<br>• Chrome |
| Plug-ins | • Oracle JRE 1. (Update 121 or Higher)<br>• Allow ActiveX (filtering must be enabled for ActiveX plug-ins)<br>• Cookies must be enabled<br>• Java Plug-in 1.7_7 or later |
| Other Software Loaded on System/Image | • Anti-Virus<br>• Adobe Reader 6.0 or later |
| Thin Clients and VMware Comments | • Windows 2012 64-bit Edition with Remote Desktop Session Host (RD Session Host), and with 32-bit/64-bitCitrix XenApp 6.0<br>• Windows 2008 R2/R2 SP1 64-bitEdition with Remote Desktop Session Host (RD Session Host), and with 32-bit/64-bit Citrix XenApp 6.0<br>• Windows Server 2008 SP1/SP2 64-bitEdition with Remote Desktop Session Host (RD Session Host), and with 32-bit/64-bit Citrix XenApp 5.0<br>• Citrix 32-bit/64-bit XenApp 7.5/7.6 and XenDesktop 7.x<br>• VMware View (VDI) 5.x Supported by all desktop applications except: |

| Computer/Software Item | Requirements |
|---|---|
| | ○ Desktop Messaging Client if Published Application<br>○ Strategic Planner<br>○ Desktop Gadget<br>○ Partially supported by DPA client<br>• Windows 2012 R2 Terminal Services |

### 2.3 AIRS Site Accreditation

Successful Applicants must either be fully accredited by the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems (**AIRS**) or have a "conditional" accreditation status from AIRS at the time of Application. The purpose of the accreditation process is to assess the extent to which an I&R agency complies with quality practices within the field, as defined by the *AIRS Standards and Quality Indicators for Professional Information and Referral* (AIRS Standards). I&R agencies (AICs) work collaboratively with AIRS to ensure a strong foundation for service delivery and future development. The AIRS *Standards Manual* can be accessed in **Exhibit G, AIRS Standards and Quality Indicators**.

Successful Applicants must maintain their AIRS accreditation throughout the duration of the contract period. Successful Applicants that are in conditional accreditation status at the contract start date must achieve full accreditation within six months (180 days).

### 2.4 Financial Systems

The Successful Applicant shall have financial systems in place to maintain internal controls, ensure proper management of federal and state funds, maximize non-federal resources, and maintain solvency. The Successful Applicant's accounting and internal control systems must meet the following requirements:

A. The systems must be appropriate to the size of the organization.

B. The accounting system must consist of source documents, a chart of accounts, journals, ledgers, and routine financial reports.

C. The accounting system must be capable of producing expenditure reports, cost center analyses, budget formats, and automated reports as required by, and without additional support from, HHSC.

D. The internal controls system shall safeguard the Applicant's assets, produce accurate accounting data, promote efficient operations, and encourage adherence to prescribed accounting policies and procedures.

E. Effective internal control shall involve a division of responsibility among different employees for a sequence of related functions, clear establishment of each employee's responsibilities and duties, and use of standards such as procurement policies, proofs, checks, and other security measures.

## 3 PLAN OF OPERATIONS

The Applicant shall develop and maintain an HHSC/TIRN approved plan of operations. An initial plan must be submitted with the Applicant's application. If a contract is offered, a final plan must be submitted to HHSC/TIRN within thirty (30) business days after execution of the contract. Ongoing plan updates and changes shall be submitted to HHSC/TIRN for approval at least thirty (30) business days before a change becomes effective.

The initial and subsequent plans of operation shall include the following:

A. Hours of operation and the setting in which the services will be provided;

B. Job titles and contact information for AIC staff and their responsibilities related to fulfilling contractual obligations;

C. Number and job classifications of staff delivering services;

D. Qualifications and competencies of each staff member to be paid under this contract;

E. Comprehensive description of Applicant's policies and procedures for each of the core functions provided under this contract, including:

   1. Data Resource Management (see Section 3.3 **Data Resource Management**)
   2. Information and Referral Services (see Section 3.4..1 **Information and Referral**)
   3. Disaster Preparedness and Response (see Section 3.4.2 **Disaster Preparedness and Response**)
   4. Outreach Activities (see Section 3.4..6 **Outreach Activities**)

F. Comprehensive description and delivery method for services provided to customers;

G. Assurance that AIC staff meet the required qualifications outlined in Section 3.1 **AIC Staff Requirements**.

For planning purposes, Applicants should refer to **Exhibit G, AIRS Standards and Quality Indicator**, Funding and Call Volume Estimates, to determine capacity needs.

## 3.1 AIC Staff Requirements

AIC staff must possess and maintain the knowledge, skills, experience, and abilities necessary to deliver contracted services, achieve contract outcomes, satisfy technical requirements, and meet all responsibilities, according to the current AIRS Standards. The Successful Applicant must fill the six key staff positions listed in the following sections. Responsibilities for each position and minimum qualifications for these positions are described below. (Note: Staff may serve in multiple capacities, depending upon the size of the AIC and its configuration. The Applicant must explain this in **Attachment A, Narrative Proposal** as part of its Plan of Operations and Staffing Plan, including how the proposed staff configuration will satisfy contractual requirements.)

### 3.1.1 Program Director – Responsibilities and Qualifications

The Program Director is responsible for the overall provision and coordination of information and referral services and staff training. The individual in this position must have the following minimum qualifications:

A. Bachelor's degree, and a minimum of three years of work experience in a related field; or master's degree and a minimum of one year of work experience in a related field.

B. If the person being considered for this position does not have a bachelor's degree, one of the following may be substituted to satisfy this requirement:

   1. A minimum of seven (7) years of work experience in a related field; or
   2. A minimum of four (4) years of call center management and/or lead experience.

### 3.1.2 Contact Center Manager – Responsibilities and Qualifications

The Contact Center Manager is responsible for contact center operations, including the ability to forecast and effectively manage contact volume, and schedule staff and training to meet service level objectives. The Contact Center Manager is responsible for monitoring the HHSC/TIRN contact center real-time and historical reporting data for telephony system activity, as well as activity related to web-based chat or SMS text service, if applicable. The minimum qualifications for this position include:

A. Bachelor's degree, and a minimum of one year of work experience in a related field; or a master's degree.

B. If the person being considered for this position does not have a bachelor's degree, one of the following may be substituted to satisfy this requirement:

1. A minimum of five (5) years of work experience in a related field; or
2. A minimum of two and one half (2.5) years of call center experience.

### 3.1.3 Resource Manager – Responsibilities and Qualifications

The Resource Manager is responsible for creating and maintaining a comprehensive database of resources in the AIC service region in accordance with AIRS Standards. The employee in this full-time position must hold the AIRS Certified Resource Specialist – Database Curator (**CRS-DC**) certification. If the employee does not have this certification at the time of proposal submission, the Applicant must provide a plan for the employee to obtain CRS-DC certification within six (6) months of eligibility for the exam. (If the CRS-certified employee departs the program during the contract period, the AIC must provide HHSC/TIRN a written plan that will result in a staff member's CRS-DC certification within six (6) months of eligibility for the exam.)

The Resource Manager must have the following minimum qualifications:

A. Bachelor's Degree and one year of experience in a related field.

B. If the person being considered for this position does not have a bachelor's degree, one of the following may be substituted to satisfy this requirement:

   1. A minimum of five (5) years of work experience in a related field and a High School Diploma or General Education Development (GED) certificate; or
   2. A minimum of two and one half (2.5) years of call center experience or social service delivery and a High School Diploma or GED certificate.

Note: In situations in which the host agency for the AIC covers more than one AIC region, the Resource Manager may be required to be located and serve in the region in which the AIC does not have a physical presence.

### 3.1.4 Information and Referral Contact Specialist – Responsibilities and Qualifications

I&R Contact Specialists are responsible for handling the inquiries that come into the contact center from individuals seeking assistance. Each I&R Contact Specialist must hold an AIRS Community Resource Specialist (**CRS**) certification. If the employee does not have this certification at the time of proposal submission, the Applicant must include a plan for the employee to obtain CRS certification within six (6) months of eligibility for the exam. The I&R Contact Specialists must also have the following minimum qualifications:

A. Bachelor's Degree.

B. If the person being considered for this position does not have a bachelor's degree, one of the following may be substituted to satisfy this requirement:

   1. A minimum of four (4) years of work experience in a related field and a High School Diploma or GED certificate; or

   2. A minimum of two (2) years of call center experience or social service delivery and a High School Diploma or GED certificate.

### 3.1.5 Information Technology Support Staff – Responsibilities and Qualifications

IT Support Staff are responsible for providing technical support to the Applicant organization. This function may be provided by hired staff or the Applicant may choose to subaward for this service. In either scenario, the IT Support Staff must have the following minimum qualifications:

A. CCNA/CCNP Voice certification - Microsoft Certified IT professional.

B. IP telephony experience, specifically with Cisco phones in a call center environment.

### 3.1.6 Community Outreach Coordinator – Responsibilities and Qualifications

The Community Outreach Coordinator is responsible for developing and maintaining cooperative relationships within the designated region for the purpose of promoting and expanding 2-1-1 services. The Community Outreach Coordinator must have the following minimum qualifications:

A. Bachelor's degree, and a minimum of one year of work experience in a related field; or a master's degree.

B. If the person being considered for this position does not have a Bachelor's degree, one of the following may be substituted to satisfy this requirement:

   1. A minimum of five (5) years of related work experience; or
   2. A minimum of two and a half (2.5) years of call center experience.

Note: In situations in which the host agency for the AIC covers more than one AIC region, the Community Outreach Coordinator may be required to be located and serve in the region in which the AIC does not have a physical presence.

### 3.1.7 Emergency Management Coordinator

The Emergency Management Coordinator is responsible for serving as the primary point of contact for HHSC/TIRN and other parties during disasters and events. The staff person designated for this position must:

A. Participate in emergency management planning, response, and recovery efforts.

B. Serve as the AIC's subject matter expert on HHSC/TIRN's *AIC Emergency Management Protocols*.

C. Develop and maintain professional relationships with local Offices of Emergency Management (**OEM**), local public health entities, Disaster District Coordinators, Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (**VOAD**), and the Red Cross.

## 3.2 AIC Staffing Plan

The Applicant must submit an AIC Staffing Plan as an attachment to the proposal that demonstrates sufficient capacity to fulfill contract and performance requirements. If a contract is offered, a final Staffing Plan shall be submitted to HHSC/TIRN thirty (30) calendar days after contract execution (or date specified by HHSC/TIRN), and thirty (30) business days prior to the end of each operational year. Ongoing Staffing Plan updates and changes shall be submitted to HHSC/TIRN for approval at least fourteen (14) calendar days before a change becomes effective (see next section).

An initial Staffing Plan must be submitted with the proposal that:

A. Identifies key personnel and the percentage of time each staff person will commit to this contract. (If 100% of a staff person's time will be dedicated to the contract, they would not be permitted to manage, oversee, or participate in other projects, contracts, etc.)

B. Defines the required qualifications, skills, and duties of each staff position, including the required positions defined in Section 3.1 **AIC Staff Requirements**.

C. Indicates if a position is full- or part-time.

D. Demonstrates sufficient AIC staffing to support the service area and contact volumes.

E. Indicates which positions will be filled by paid employees and which will be filled by trained volunteers (i.e., during disasters and emergency events when call volumes increase substantially).

F. Includes a process for requesting approval from HHSC/TIRN to augment staffing during disasters or events when the AIC may need to enlist the assistance of trained volunteers to manage increased call volumes.

G. Includes an up-to-date organizational chart showing the lines of reporting.

To establish strong accountability controls, the successful Applicant must propose and provide ongoing reporting of organizational structure and identification of key personnel, including résumés and references for HHSC/TIRN approval.

### 3.2.1 AIRS Certification for AIC Staff

At least 51% of AIC staff must be eligible for the required AIRS CRS certification by the contract start date. The AIRS Certification Program is based on established standards for the I&R field and takes into consideration the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and work-related behaviors needed by I&R staff to provide quality services. Eligibility for the AIRS certification is based on an individual's I&R and other relevant experience, as well as their educational background. Initial certification is based on the job duties the individual actually performs and/or directly supervises (see the *AIRS Standards* in **Exhibit G, AIRS Standards and Quality Indicators** for more information).

Applicants must include as an attachment to their applications photocopies of AIRS certifications for staff who will be conducting AIC services. If staff are not currently certified, the Applicant must provide a training plan and timeline for ensuring staff become certified.

### 3.2.2 Post-Award Staffing

After contract award, the Successful Applicant must report any organizational changes that result in a restructure of the organization or redirection of required key personnel to perform functions other than the responsibilities of their current position, either temporarily or permanently.

Throughout the contract period, the Successful Applicant must:

A. Maintain a core staff sufficient for successful fulfillment of contract and performance requirements with experience in the functional areas in which they work (see Section 3.1 **AIC Staff Requirements**).

B. Allocate key personnel and their percentage of time to this contract, which must be approved by HHSC.

C. Submit notification to HHSC in writing within fourteen (14) calendar days that a key personnel vacancy will occur for any reason or prior to making any changes in key personnel other than changes due to resignation, death, or military recall. Notification must include a plan to recruit key personnel.

D. Submit an initial organizational chart within thirty (30) calendar days after contract execution or date specified by HHSC, including the names and positions of all personnel assigned to this contract. The organizational chart must designate key personnel.

E. Submit an updated organizational chart as changes in personnel occur or as specified by HHSC.

F. Submit notification to HHSC in writing within ten (10) calendar days whenever key personnel are temporarily redirected to perform functions other than the responsibilities of their current position.

G. Ensure appropriate AIC staff are available to meet with HHSC and that access to those staff by HHSC is not restricted.

### 3.2.3 Staff and Volunteer Personnel Files

The Successful Applicant must create and maintain a personnel file for each AIC staff person and volunteer that includes:

A. An up-to-date job description outlining responsibilities, essential job functions, and lines of accountability;

B. Training documentation; and

C. Standardized observation and performance appraisal forms. Staff evaluations will address specific responsibilities, roles, and job functions outlined in the individuals' job descriptions and will be conducted, at a minimum, on an annual basis.

## 3.3 Data Resource Management

The AIC's regional records within the statewide database are the primary source of information regarding governmental and social service programs available to the community. AICs are responsible for collecting, updating, and managing information specific to their regions in the HHSC/TIRN-administered statewide database.

### 3.3.1 Data Quality Standards and Policies

To ensure the dissemination of accurate and comprehensive information regarding the governmental and social services resources are available to residents of Texas, AICs are required to adhere to protocols prescribed by HHSC/TIRN when determining if an entity should be included in the database and in formatting their information. AICs will use the following guidance materials when completing this function:

A. The *2-1-1 Texas Information and Referral Network Database Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria* policy was established by HHSC to provide guidelines for determining which service organizations can be listed in the statewide resource database (see **Exhibit O, 2-1-1 Texas Information and Referral Network Database Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria** for a copy of this policy).

B. The most current version of the HHSC/TIRN *Data Quality and Style Guide* standards must be used when formatting, writing, and indexing database records (see **Exhibit G, AIRS Standards and Quality Indicators** for a copy of the standards).

C. AICs must use the AIRS taxonomy standards to properly index their region's resource records in the database. Taxonomies are used to index and retrieve information about a particular subject in a systematic, unambiguous way. (Note: There are some instances in which the AIRS taxonomy standards for indexing records conflict with guidance in the HHSC/TIRN *Data Quality and Style Guide* standards. These instances are documented in the HHSC/TIRN *Data Quality and Style Guide*, which should be followed.)

### 3.3.2 Data Quality Initiatives

HHSC/TIRN engages in continuous improvement activities to ensure information contained in the statewide database is accurate and complete. On a regular basis, HHSC/TIRN staff review resource records to determine if there is missing or invalid information. If any issues are identified, HHSC/TIRN will notify the AIC and request the necessary corrections. AICs must respond to these requests and complete all data quality initiatives in the timeframe established by HHSC/TIRN. HHSC/TIRN will conduct follow-up audits to ensure all corrections were made. The goal is for AICs to achieve a passing rate of 100 percent.

### 3.3.3 Annual Formal Reviews

On an annual basis, AICs must conduct formal reviews of all active agencies in their region. AICs must have a documented process to evaluate resource records to ensure they are consistent and adhere to style guide requirements. The timing of these reviews should be based on the date of the last formal review to ensure compliance with the required timeframe. This enables AICs to perform this function throughout the year, rather than during one month. HHSC/TIRN requires formal reviews to be completed within a 13-month timeframe.

Formal reviews must be documented in writing to capture the AIC's attempts and methods used to contact the agencies, as well as the outcomes of communications with agency representatives. Documentation should also track the response rate of the agency being reviewed and contact methods used (e.g., telephone, email, fax, site visit, etc.). The AIC's formal review process must also include criteria for removing an agency from the database when information cannot be verified. Formal review documentation must be retained in accordance with contract retention requirements and provided to HHSC/TIRN via email upon request. HHSC/TIRN will conduct database audits to verify this requirement has been met. Contractor must conduct formal reviews of 100% of the active agencies within a 13-month timeframe.

#### 3.3.3.1 Annual Survey of Active Agencies

Upon direction from HHSC/TIRN, AICs shall conduct an annual survey of agencies within the contracted region using a template provided by HHSC/TIRN. The survey will measure each agency's level of satisfaction with record accuracy, as well as their assessment of any interactions they may have had with the AIC's Resource Specialists and/or Managers. The survey will also measure the agency's familiarity with and opinion of the online resource database. The AIC may complete this survey as part of the annual formal review process or as a separate activity. The AIC must meet a 100% compliance rate for survey distribution.

#### 3.3.3.2 Updating of Resource Records

AICs must update resource records when information changes or when it is determined that a record must be deactivated (i.e., when services are no longer available or when the agency no longer meets criteria in the HHSC/TIRN inclusion/exclusion policy). The AIC must have a process for documenting updates and reasons for deactivations. To ensure this requirement is being met, HHSC/TIRN will conduct database audits and request sample email communications with agency representatives.

## 3.4 2-1-1 Service Delivery

AICs must be fully operational and able to respond to inquiries 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Services must be provided by trained I&R Contact Specialists who meet the staffing requirements set forth in Section 3.1 **AIC Staff Requirements**. AICs must provide customers accurate and comprehensive information in an unbiased, non-judgmental, and culturally sensitive way to address their needs and optimize customer choice. If applicable (e.g. in the event of a special project or focused initiative), customers in need will be transferred to an entry point for specialized customer intake and/or assessment.

Equally important, I&R services must be accessible to customers with special needs and those for whom English is not their first language. HHSC/TIRN ensures AICs have access to telephony-based interpreter services.

Additionally, the AIC must have policies and procedures in place for:

A. Ensuring the confidentiality and security of all customer information, and responding to possible breaches of this information;

B. Professionally and respectfully responding to challenging or offensive customer behavior; and

C. Resolving complaints from customers and community service agencies.

HHSC/TIRN continually assesses additional methods to engage customers in need of 2-1-1 services and may direct AICs to implement new services during the contract period. Possible features that may be implemented in the future include:

A. Multi-channel information and referral services, including web chat and one-way and/or two-way texting. AICs would be required to adhere to appropriate HHSC/TIRN guidelines and performance expectations. AICs would be required to enroll clients into communication modalities (e.g., one-way text messaging, two-way text messaging, and/or smart phone applications) if directed to do so by HHSC/TIRN.

B. Electronic referral (**e-referral**) as a future method of delivering I&R services for 2-1-1 users. Once e-referral is established as a means for providing I&R services, the AIC must adhere to appropriate HHSC guidelines for processing e-referrals, including provisions outlined in the **Exhibit D, Data Use Agreement** or **Exhibit E, Data Use Agreement for Governmental Entity**.

Regardless of the method by which services are provided, the elements of quality I&R services are the same.

### 3.4.1 Information and Referral

I&R Contact Specialists must adhere to AIRS Standards for Service Delivery when providing required services (see *AIRS Standards and Quality Indicators for Professional Information and Referral* in **Exhibit G, AIRS Standards and Quality Indicators**). This process involves specific steps, which are expanded upon in the AIRS Standards and involve:

A. Greeting the customer and establishing and maintaining a rapport with them throughout the interaction;

B. Using active listening and effective questioning skills to assess, clarify, and prioritize the customer's needs;

C. Providing the requested information and/or appropriate resources;

D. Making referrals to organizations that can assist the customer with their identified needs, ensuring the customer is aware of anything about the organizations that may be helpful in making an informed choice;

E. Assisting the customer in identifying alternative solutions when the requested services are not available in the area; and

F. Documenting the reason for the call (i.e., customer needs and challenges) and the actions taken by the I&R Contact Specialist (e.g., assessment, provision of information and/or referral, crisis intervention, advocacy efforts, etc.).

G. Conducting follow-up contacts with vulnerable populations and to assess customer satisfaction/quality assurance.

In addition, all I&R Contact Specialists must be fully trained on the AIC's Crisis Call protocol and how to respond to such situations.

#### 3.4.1.1 Customer Advocacy

In certain situations, it may be necessary for I&R Contact Specialists to take additional steps to help customers obtain the services they need (i.e., making additional calls or other actions on behalf of the customer). AICs must establish a policy that explains when it is allowable for I&R Contact Specialists to conduct this type of advocacy assistance and when it would be necessary to involve supervisory staff. The policy must also address customer authorization and confidentiality issues. (More in-depth information on this requirement can be found in the *AIRS Standards and Quality Indicators for Professional Information and Referral* located in **Exhibit G, AIRS Standards and Quality Indicators**.)

#### 3.4.1.2 Crisis Intervention

AICs must develop policies and protocol for assisting customers who are in crisis. I&R Contact Specialists must be trained to implement crisis protocol when a customer is at risk or in urgent need of intervention assistance. This includes the ability to recognize potentially concerning situations and assess the level of risk or endangerment. Examples of such situations include:

A. Threats of suicide or homicide

B. Any form of adult and/or child abuse or assault (i.e., physical, sexual, severe neglect)

C. Mental health emergencies

D. Other endangerment circumstances

The AIC's crisis protocol must include procedures for:

A. De-escalating and stabilizing the customer;

B. Assessing the situation and determining next steps;

C. Involving other emergency services, when warranted (e.g., 911, formal crisis intervention centers, etc.);

D. Documenting the interaction with the customer;

E. Training, mentoring, and monitoring I&R Contact Specialists in crisis management and applicable state legislation regarding mandatory reporting procedures.

More in-depth information on this requirement can be found in the *AIRS Standards and Quality Indicators for Professional Information and Referral* located in **Exhibit G, AIRS Standards and Quality Indicators**.

#### 3.4.1.3 Customer Service and Follow-up for Contacts

AICs must establish policies and procedures for conducting follow-up contacts with customers. Follow-up contacts may include those driven by the individual customer, such as those whose safety is at risk, whose basic needs are not being met, or who may be vulnerable and need additional assistance accessing services. Other follow-up contacts may be conducted as part of program evaluation efforts to assess outcomes of I&R services. Follow-up contacts should be conducted with the permission of the customer one to three days after the customer's initial contact with the I&R Contact Specialist. The I&R Contact Specialist will document the follow-up call in a standard questionnaire provided by HHSC/TIRN.

In addition, customer satisfaction/quality assurance follow-up contacts must also be conducted as part of the AIC's effort to improve overall service delivery. These types of follow-up contacts help the AIC determine the extent to which the referral information was helpful in addressing the customer's needs and/or if the information provided has any inaccuracies that must be updated in the database. AICs should also be able to evaluate the effectiveness of existing community service providers and identify areas where service gaps exist. (This can also be determined by evaluating "unmet need" data collected in contact documentation.)

AICs will report the outcomes of these follow-up contacts in their quarterly reports to HHSC/TIRN.

#### 3.4.1.4 Contact Documentation

I&R Contact Specialists are required to collect and record data for all customer contacts. At a minimum, AICs must document and track the following demographic information for each customer:

A. Zip code
B. City and county of residence
C. Age (if customer is willing to provide this information)
D. Gender (if customer is willing to provide this information)
E. Military status (if customer is willing to provide this information)

In addition, AICs must document the following information regarding the contact itself:

A. Contact Type, including:
    1. Information Only
    2. Assessment and Referral
    3. Assessment without Referral
    4. Crisis Intervention
    5. Customer Advocacy
B. Presenting need(s)

C. Organizations to which referrals were provided

D. Whether or not the customer's need was met. If the need was not met, a reason code must be provided as to why the need was not met (e.g., Client ineligible, Service Does Not Exist, etc.).

E. Other required data as specified by HHSC/TIRN.

Note: HHSC/TIRN may add/change/delete contact documentation requirements at any time and AICs must implement the changes accordingly.

#### 3.4.1.5 Service Level Targets

Service levels are a measure of an AIC's capacity to answer a percentage of total call volume within a predetermined time threshold. They demonstrate how accessible the AIC is to customers and indicate to management how many I&R Contact Specialists are needed to provide efficient service. Below are the required service level targets set by HHSC/TIRN.

In regions where the monthly call volume is 10,000 calls or less, the AIC must:

A. Answer 80% of incoming calls within 60 seconds or less;

B. Have an abandoned call rate of 10% or less; and

C. Have a Rolled-Over/Not Answered (**RONA**) call rate of 1% or less.

In regions where the monthly call volume exceeds 10,000 calls, the AIC must:

A. During Year 1 of the contract term, answer 75% of incoming calls within 60 seconds or less;

B. During Year 2 of the contract term, answer 80% of incoming calls within 60 seconds or less;

C. Have an abandoned call rate of 10% or less for both years; and

D. Have a RONA call rate of 1% or less for both years.

Additional information on call volume estimates and performance reporting can be found in **Exhibit G, AIRS Standards and Quality Indicators**.

### 3.4.2 Disaster Preparedness and Response

AICs must have policies and procedures in place to enable it to respond to disasters or events that affect the AIC region and/or other areas of the state. HHSC/TIRN defines a disaster or event as "any unplanned occurrence that has the potential to result in, or may have already resulted in, property damage, deaths, and/or injuries to a community (e.g., natural disaster, pandemic)." During such occurrences, it is expected that call volume may increase in the affected geographic area, as well as in other areas of the state. AICs must be ready to respond in a short period of time and effectively coordinate with local and state emergency management organizations.

All AICs are responsible for monitoring, researching, and determining the details and scope of any disasters/events that affect their regions. This information must be promptly provided to HHSC/TIRN and the entire 2-1-1 network, as described and required in the *AIC Emergency*

*Management Protocols* (accessible in **Exhibit G, AIRS Standards and Quality Indicators**). Additionally, AICs are expected to support the entire network during disasters/events, whether or not there is a direct impact to their area.

AICs shall adhere to the processes set forth in the *AIC Emergency Management Protocols* and must participate in emergency management planning, response and recovery, as directed by HHSC/TIRN. Training and support on the protocols is provided by HHSC/TIRN and accessible through the TIRN Learning Management System.

#### 3.4.2.1 Emergency Operations, Escalation of Services, and Business Continuity Plan

The Successful Applicant must develop and submit an Emergency Operations, Escalation of Services, and Business Continuity Plan that describes the AIC's processes for emergency preparation and response, including instances when AIC operations are directly impacted by a disaster or other event that has the potential to disrupt services and increases contact volume beyond staff capacity and jeopardizes performance requirements. It is critical the plan provides steps the AIC will take to ensure uninterrupted service delivery to customers and detail how the Contractor will increase its capacity for service delivery both during and following its normal operating hours. The initial Emergency Operations, Escalation of Services, and Business Continuity Plan is due within 45 calendar days after contract execution or by the date specified by the System Agency. Once approved, the plan must be updated annually and submitted to HHSC/TIRN within thirty (30) calendar days prior to the end of each state fiscal year.

The plan must address the following:

A. The process by which the AIC will increase capacity for service delivery during and after a disaster/event to meet the needs of the community. This section must include procedures for:

    1. Adding staff resources to handle an increase in the number of inbound calls and contacts (e.g., web-based chat sessions and/or text messages) during and beyond normal operating hours.
    2. Expanding the resource management function to collect, update, manage, and disseminate timely, complete, and accurate emergency management-related I&R sources in adherence with the *AIC Data Quality and Style Guide*, the *AIC Emergency Management Protocols*, and as further directed by HHSC/TIRN.
    3. Ensuring Emergency Management Coordinators, Emergency Management Coordinator back-ups, and Resource Managers have 24-hour access to email and phone communications.

B. The procedure for informing HHSC within one (1) day of an unplanned disaster/event that affects the performance of operations, and a timeframe for initiating the AIC's Emergency Operations and Business Continuity Plan.

C. A risk assessment of potential issues that may realistically occur during operations, including but not limited to instances such as power/internet outages, fires, floods,

severe weather events, medical emergencies, pandemics, bomb threats, radiological threats, workplace violence, etc.

D. An outline of courses of action to address and resolve the anticipated problems.

E. A description of the Applicant's approach to identifying a disaster recovery site location, which must include the location of the disaster recovery site and the proximity to the Applicant's central site.

F. A description of backup and recovery procedures that specify timeframes for restoring service and whether the service restored is full or partial.

G. A contingency plan addressing interruption to the established plan of operations and outlining communication processes, short- and/or long-term resolutions, action steps, and response time frames.

H. A description of the documentation and tracking instruments that will allow HHSC/TIRN to determine if performance measures are met.

I. A proposed reporting mechanism specific to disaster recovery and contingency operations.

#### 3.4.2.2 Disaster Training and Preparedness Activities

The AIC must ensure all staff have a working knowledge of the *AIC Emergency Management Protocols* and are able to respond appropriately when a disaster/event occurs. They should understand how the emergency command and control structure is set up in their region and at the state and federal levels.

Program Directors, Emergency Management Coordinators, Contact Center Managers, and Resource Managers must complete the following National Incident Management System (NIMS) / Incident Command System "**ICS**) training courses within the first 90 business days of employment and provide copies of certificates to HHSC/TIRN.

A. IS-700 – this training provides an overview of NIMS, including key concepts and principles, resource management, ICS organizational structures, communication standards and formats, interconnectivity of disaster agencies, and emergency operations functions.

B. ICS-100 – this training covers the principles and basic structure of ICS, its functional areas, staff roles, and the relationship between ICS and NIMS.

Additionally, Emergency Management Coordinators must be trained in resource management to ensure adequate back-up for the Resource Manager, and accurate emergency resource information.

On an annual basis, the AIC must conduct internal drills to assess staff preparedness for handling an actual disaster/event. These drills must test the following:

A. The accuracy of key personnel contact information and call tree structure;

B. The extent to which the AIC is prepared to take calls in a crisis situation; and

C. The extent to which AIC staff are trained in disaster/event procedures, in accordance with the *AIC Emergency Management Protocols*.

#### 3.4.2.3 Incident Reports

If the AIC experiences a system outage interrupting service due to any cause (e.g. Internet failure or power outage), it must notify HHSC/TIRN within 30 minutes and provide at least twice daily updates and at a change of circumstance to HHSC/TIRN until the identified incident is resolved. If system outage last 2 hours or more, the AIC must submit an incident report in the prescribed format below and include the following information:

A. Details of the outage/incident;
B. When and how the outage/incident was discovered;
C. Impacts to operations, systems, and/or staff;
D. Root cause of the outage/incident, including verifying documentation from the provider responsible for the outage;
E. Detailed corrective measures taken by the AIC to mitigate the problem and long-term corrective actions to detect and prevent future incidents, including identification of alternative providers of the failed service, if feasible and/or available.

### 3.4.3 Focused Initiatives Mandated by HHSC/TIRN

HHSC/TIRN will require AICs to participate in focused initiatives to enhance I&R services.

#### 3.4.3.1 Child Care I&R Services

AICs receive funding to provide and promote quality child care I&R services. AICs are given access to external databases to assist them in providing the following services:

A. Information on and referrals to child care providers that will meet the customers' needs with regard to location, age requirements, types of programs provided, etc.; and

B. Referrals to Head Start and Early Head Start programs and services.

AICs must include listings in their databases regarding information on Texas Workforce Commission child care subsidies available through the regional Workforce Solutions offices. These listings must be included according to HHSC/TIRN style guidelines and other specific direction (e.g., use of a template, specific taxonomy indexing).

In addition, staff must be trained on the purpose and function of Child Care I&R Services and use of the external databases. AICs must submit reports as requested and/or required by HHSC/TIRN.

#### 3.4.3.2 Summer Meals Program

AICs will respond to information and referral calls in reference to the Texas Department of Agriculture (**TDA**) Summer Food Program received in their region as well as submit data reports as required by HHSC for the duration of the project or as directed by HHSC/TIRN.

#### 3.4.3.3 VetConnect

AICs that have been identified by HHSC/TIRN will respond to calls from service members (active; veterans and/or retired) and their family members seeking assistance and provide military-specific referrals and/or other resources requested and/or deemed appropriate. Additionally, the participating AICs shall submit data reports as required by HHSC/TIRN for the duration of the project or as directed.

### 3.4.4 Focused Initiatives Not Mandated by HHSC/TIRN

HHSC/TIRN may require AICs to participate in other appropriate federal, state, and/or local programs to fulfill special I&R needs, such as specialized client intake, resource data sharing, and other information and assistance. AICs are required to implement these initiatives with support from HHSC/TIRN and comply with reporting requirements. Additionally, HHSC/TIRN reserves the right to add other initiatives during the contract period via amendment.

HHSC/TIRN may also require and/or invite AICs to participate in focused initiatives to enhance I&R services such as,

#### 3.4.4.1 Texas Balance of State Continuum of Care

AICs that fall within the Texas Balance of State Continuum of Care coverage area, or if any of the AIC counties fall within the Region, (available at: https://www.thn.org/texas-balance-state-continuum-care/) may also receive funding to provide specialized intake for customers experiencing a housing crisis. To effectively provide this service, these AICs may be asked to identify and recruit potential coordinated entry sites such homeless shelters, churches, community clinics, or other facilities where individuals at risk of homelessness visit. Resource Managers must provide comprehensive, up-to-date, and accurate basic needs resource records for inclusion in the Homeless Management Information System managed by the Texas Balance of State Continuum of Care. If necessary and appropriate, customers in need will be transferred to the designated entry point where they will receive specialized customer intake and/or assessment. Engagement in this project is contingent upon available funding and may require up to a 25 percent match contribution. AICs must submit reports as requested and/or required by HHSC/TIRN.

#### 3.4.4.2 Kinship Navigation

A growing number of children are living with and being raised by their grandparents or other relative caregivers as a preferred alternative to foster care. Relative caregivers often face challenges obtaining accurate information on the services and benefits available to them and the children they are raising. AICs support these caregivers through the Kinship Navigation initiative, which helps connect them to the resources available in their communities. HHSC/TIRN will provide guidance to AICs for program implementation, which may include

the following activities:

A. Provide enhanced navigation assistance, expanded data capture, and targeted follow-up to inquiries from kinship caregivers;
B. Identify kinship caregivers proactively, as relevant and according to HHSC/TIRN instruction, protocol, and/or policy;
C. Ask customers that meet certain demographic criteria additional questions (beyond standard I&R), record and document responses, and provide outbound survey links;
D. Offer all kinship caregivers a follow-up contact that includes a call and/or automated follow-up survey(s);
E. Conduct specialized customer intake and/or assessment and send the call intake form to a partner organization(s), as appropriate;
F. Conduct additional follow-up/navigation assistance as needed and/or until the kinship caregiver responses have been completed; and
G. Provide comprehensive, up-to-date, and accurate kinship caregiving resource records, including any supplementary fields added as a part of this project.

AICs must submit reports as requested and/or required by HHSC/TIRN. Additionally, HHSC/TIRN reserves the right to add other initiatives during the contract period.

### 3.4.5 Special Projects

AICs will participate in local special projects as directed by HHSC/TIRN to enhance I&R services within the designated service area/region. AICs must maintain and provide call center staffing that is flexible and responsive to the needs of Special Projects that may be assigned during the contract period. Special Projects are initiated locally and usually involve some level of staff training, use resource information not generally available to the region, and/or impact call volume. These projects may be financially supported by a partner organization of the Successful Applicant or they may be unfunded.

AICs must submit a Special Project Application to obtain authorization from HHSC/TIRN. If approved, HHSC/TIRN will issue a contract amendment that must be executed prior to the AIC engaging in any Special Projects and/or external partnership(s) that may have impact to service delivery, call handle time, and/or require HHSC/TIRN resources (e.g., telephony platform, phones, phone lines and/or technological support team/services).

### 3.4.6 Outreach Activities

Community outreach and education is important to ensuring the public, local partners, and other stakeholders are aware of 2-1-1 TIRN services and how they benefit the community.

#### 3.4.6.1 Outreach Project Work Plan

The Applicant must submit with its application an Outreach Project Work Plan that includes at least ten (10) outreach events the AIC will conduct/participate in during the contract period to promote and educate the public about 2-1-1 TIRN services. The plan must include a description of the various activities the AIC will conduct, which may include public

presentations to prospective customers, community education events, use of social media to publicize services, running tables at community health/job fairs, and other applicable activities. A variety of outreach strategies should be used to meet the needs of the population in the region, with particular focus on reaching people who have difficulty accessing services due to disabilities, homelessness, language barriers, and other barriers.

In addition, AICs may develop brochures and other media for distribution in their regions. AICs are required to request approval of all outreach items before costs can be incurred.

Successful Applicants must maintain records of the outreach activities conducted and report specific data elements on their quarterly reports (see Section 5.1 **AIC Quarterly Performance Reports**).

### 3.4.7 AIC Staff Training

AICs are responsible for providing training to new and existing staff related to the provision of information and referral services, database management, and the use of HHSC/TIRN mandated guidelines and reference materials, as appropriate for their respective roles. In addition to training on their daily functions, all staff must receive training on the *AIC Emergency Management Protocols*.

HHSC/TIRN will monitor training reports, AIC staff participation and certificate achievements in the TIRN Learning Management System, and attendance sheets to verify training requirements are being met.

#### 3.4.7.1 Additional Training Requirements – I&R Contact Specialists

An integral part of the training process for I&R Contact Specialists is the provision of mentoring, coaching, and monitoring to ensure the delivery of quality services. In addition to having the necessary skills to provide information and referrals, I&R Contact Specialists must also be trained to use the HHSC/TIRN Crisis Protocol. Initial training can be taken through the TIRN Learning Management System; however, supervisors of I&R Contact Specialists must also provide more intensive learning opportunities through mentoring and coaching. HHSC/TIRN provides AICs a *Quality Standards and Definitions Guide* to assist them in this process (the guide can be accessed in **Exhibit P - TIRN Quality Standards & Definitions Guide**).

I&R Contact Specialists may also receive training on the various projects under Focused Initiatives (see Section 3.4.3 **Focused Initiatives Mandated by HHSC/TIRN)** to ensure they have the proper knowledge and skills to effectively implement those activities.

#### 3.4.7.2 Staff Training Plan

The Successful Applicant will develop and submit a plan for ensuring training and continuing education opportunities for AIC staff that will lead to expanded professional capacity and in-depth expertise. At a minimum, the plan should address the job-related knowledge and competencies required to achieve organizational goals and objectives, as well as the specific requirements set forth herein.

#### 3.4.7.3 Additional Training Requirements

The Successful Applicant shall participate in additional trainings as deemed necessary by HHSC. Content may be related to new projects, initiatives, performance measures, or additional quality improvement activities.

### 3.4.7 Cultural Competence

The Successful Applicant will develop and maintain a cultural competence plan for equitably serving all individuals. The plan must be submitted and address how the Applicant will:

A. Meet the needs of individuals of various cultures, races, ethnic backgrounds, and religions who reside in the local area;

B. Tailor services based on the intellectual functioning, literacy, level of education, and comprehension ability of each individual in order to ensure all information is presented in a way that meets their needs;

C. Provide services in the individual's primary language, whether provided directly by the Applicant or through telephony-related interpreter services made available by HHSC/TIRN; and

D. Ensure services are provided to all individuals in a manner that recognizes and affirms their worth and protects and preserves their dignity.

The Cultural Competence Plan is due within 45 calendar days after contract execution, or by the date specified by the System Agency. The Annual Cultural Competency Plan is due within 30 calendar days prior to the end of each federal fiscal year.

## 4 QUALITY ASSURANCE AND MONITORING

The Successful Applicant must submit a Quality Assurance Plan that documents the processes for monitoring the quality of services provided by I&R staff, as well as the integrity of database resource listings. The plan must also include the process by which individuals seeking assistance from the AIC can provide feedback about the services they received. While some of this information can be collected during customer satisfaction/quality assurance follow-up contacts conducted by the AIC, there must also be a process for tracking customer-initiated feedback and any complaints reported.

The Quality Assurance Plan is a dynamic plan subject to reviews and updates frequently by the Successful Applicant and System Agency. It must also be available to authorized System Agency staff at all times. The Successful Applicant must provide the Quality Assurance Plan during the following deliverable periods:

A. Submit an initial Quality Management Plan, 45 calendar days prior to the scheduled operational start date, or as directed by System Agency;
B. Submit an Annual Quality Management Plan 45 calendar days prior to the end of each operational year of the contract; and

C. Submit a monthly Quality Management Report, in a form acceptable to System Agency within 15 business days following the end of the report month.

### 4.1 Quality Assurance Plan

The Quality Assurance Plan must include the following elements:

A. The sampling and review process supervisors will use to periodically assess the overall quality of I&R services provided by all Resource Managers and I&R Contact Specialists, including database audits, recorded and active calls, and written transcriptions of web chat and text inquiries (if applicable).

B. A description of the mentoring/coaching process to be used with Resource Managers and I&R Contact Specialists, and how remediation plans will be developed to address identified performance issues.

C. A monitoring schedule for the contract period.

D. The process for enabling customer feedback about 2-1-1 services (see Section 4.2 **Customer Feedback/Complaint Tracking** for additional detail).

HHSC/TIRN provides AICs tools and written guidance for monitoring I&R services; however, at any time during the contract period HHSC/TIRN may prescribe additional methods for ensuring quality services, which must be implemented by the AIC. Monitoring must be conducted by a relevant supervisor (e.g., Director, Contact Center Manager, Lead I&R Contact Specialist), and an average quality assessment score of 80% or more must be met for interactions (including calls, web-based chat sessions, and text messaging) sampled during the reporting period.

### 4.2 Customer Feedback/Complaint Tracking

As part of the Quality Assurance Plan, the Successful Applicant must explain the process by which individuals seeking assistance from the AIC can provide feedback about the services they received. This part of the plan must address:

A. The method used to document and track client feedback;

B. The process for identifying and communicating to HHSC/TIRN any unmet customer needs so the AIC can work in collaboration with HHSC/TIRN to address them; and

C. The procedure for notifying HHSC/TIRN within 10 business days of any complaint against the AIC or any AIC staff. The notification must include the following:

1. Contact name and other identifying information;

2. Date contact received;

3. Method of receipt (fax, phone, email, etc.);

4. Reason for contact (in line with standard definitions developed by Health and Human Services Office of the Ombudsmen);

5. Details to isolate potential trends such as location or particular service;

6. Resolution actions;

7. Date of resolution (if the complaint is not resolved within 10 business days, the Applicant must notify HHSC of the resolution upon the final communication with the client);

8. Determination of whether complaints are substantiated or not; and

9. Record of final communication with the customer, including date and method.

If, after a good faith effort by the AIC to resolve the complaint, the complaint has not been resolved to the customer's satisfaction, the AIC must provide the customer the following contact information for the HHSC Office of Ombudsman:

| |
|---|
| Health and Human Services Commission<br>Office of the Ombudsman<br>MC H-700<br>P.O. Box 13247<br>Austin, Texas 78711-3247<br><br>Phone: 1-877-787-8999<br><br>Relay Texas for individuals with a hearing or speech disability: 7-1-1 or 1-800-735-2989<br><br>Fax: 1-888-780-8099<br><br>Website Address: https://hhs.texas.gov/about-hhs/your-rights/hhs-office-ombudsman |

HHSC/TIRN reserves the right to change the customer feedback process and may require any feedback to be directed to HHSC/TIRN staff in addition to the AIC.

## 5 KEY PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS AND DELIVERABLES

The Successful Applicant shall ensure services are provided at or above the level established in **Exhibit H, Key Performance Requirements (KPRs)**, and that all required deliverables and reports are submitted in accordance with **Exhibit I, Deliverables**. The Successful Applicant shall provide a point of contact (GRANTEE Contact) that can address questions or concerns regarding **Exhibit H, Key Performance Requirements (KPRs)**.

### 5.1 AIC Quarterly Performance Reports

On a quarterly basis, the successful Applicant will submit to HHSC/TIRN the AIC Quarterly Performance Report to cover the periods shown below. The QPR shall include data for each month reflected in the quarter. The reports will be due on the 20th day of the month following the quarter for which the report is due, unless the 20th day falls on a weekend or State holiday, then it is due the following business day. AICs may choose to subaward with other centers in the Texas 2-1-1 network to fulfill coverage requirements during overnight hours, weekends, holidays, office or agency

relocations, conferences, trainings, meetings, and other periods of extended offline time; however, offline requests and any applicable subawarding arrangement must be submitted in writing and approved by HHSC/TIRN.

| Quarter | Months Included in Quarter | Report Due Date |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | September 1 through November 30 | December 20th |
| 2 | December 1 through February 28/29 | March 20th |
| 3 | March 1 through May 31 | June 20th |
| 4 | June 1 through August 31 | September 20th |

### 5.1.1 Required Data Elements

A high-level summary of the data elements to be reported in the AIC Quarterly Performance Report are included in the table below. (Note: The Successful Applicant shall track other data and reporting elements to be determined by HHSC/TIRN and will report on progress and services related to additional initiatives introduced during the contract period.)

| Performance Category | Data Elements to be Reported |
|---|---|
| AIC Interactions | Number and percentage of calls answered by a staff person within 60 seconds or less. |
| | Number and percentage of abandoned calls. |
| | Number and percentage of calls Rolled-Over/Not Answered (RONA). |
| | Number of follow-up contacts scheduled (for each unique caller). |
| | Number of scheduled follow-up contacts completed. |
| | Attrition rate of follow-up contacts (total completed/total scheduled). |
| | Number of Text Messaging Sessions |
| | Number of Web-Based Chat Sessions |
| | Percent of total estimated web-based chat and text message sessions handled (**Exhibit Q, 2-1-1 TIRN Estimated Messaging Sessions Handled by Region**) |
| Quality Assurance | Number of customer satisfaction/quality assurance follow-up contacts made during the quarter. |
| | De-identified, aggregate summary analysis of customer satisfaction/quality assurance follow-up contacts. |
| | Number of validated complaints issued against the AIC or its staff. |

| Performance Category | Data Elements to be Reported |
|---|---|
| Data Resource Management | Number of data quality initiatives assigned to the AIC by HHSC/TIRN during the quarter. |
| | Number of assigned data quality initiatives completed during the quarter. |
| | Number of Annual Formal Reviews conducted during the quarter |
| | Number of resource records updated as a result of the formal reviews. |
| | Number of resource records deleted as a result of the formal reviews. |
| Outreach/Education Activities | Number of outreach and community education events conducted by the AIC regarding 2-1-1 services and special initiatives. |
| | Estimated number of individuals outreached at various events during the quarter |

### 5.2 Applicant Performance and Compliance

To ensure compliance, HHSC may take the following actions in the event of non-compliance to any of the contract requirements, KPRs, or Quality Assurance Plans:

A. Suspending all or part of the Contract;

B. Requiring the successful Applicant to take specific corrective actions in order to remain in compliance with the terms of the Contract;

C. Recouping payments made to the Applicant found to be in error;

D. Suspending, limiting, or placing conditions on the continued performance of the Project;

E. Imposing any other remedies authorized under this Contract; and

F. Imposing any other remedies, sanctions or penalties permitted by federal or state statute, law, regulation, or rule.

### 5.3 AIC Performance and Support Activities

The Successful Applicant shall participate in required activities specified by HHSC/TIRN that support the continuous improvement of the 2-1-1/TIRN program, including but not limited to conference calls, webinars, training events, and in-person meetings.

### 5.4 Annual Performance Report

The Successful Applicant shall complete and submit an Annual Performance Report within 45 calendar days after the start of each state fiscal year. HHSC will provide a template to the

Successful Applicant after contract execution which must be completed and submitted within the timeframes directed by HHSC.

## 6 INVOICING

The Successful Applicant shall invoice HHSC in accordance with the Contract. Unless otherwise specified in the Contract, the Successful Applicant shall submit invoices monthly by the twentieth (20th) business day of the month following the month in which expenses were incurred or services provided. Work invoice must be made for the month of service provision with the exception of certain items related to operational costs, community outreach, and staff development. Such expenses may include but are not limited to: subscriptions, computer software, memberships, prepaid outreach materials, etc.

Within the timeframes and standards established in the contract and HHSC policy, the Successful Applicant will submit an invoice, and documentation supporting the provision of services via email to 211_TIRN_SAR_VAR@hhsc.state.tx.us and AES.Invoices@hhsc.state.tx.us. The following naming convention shall be used for the subject line of the email and the invoice document file: "Legal Entity Name. Invoice #. Month Year." For example, an invoice submitted to HHSC for the month of September would be submitted as: "Texas 2-1-1. Invoice #1. September 2021." The invoice must include the following:

A. A unique identification (Invoice) number;
B. The word "invoice";
C. Date of the invoice;
D. Subrecipient's name, address, and contact information;
E. The service dates for when the services were rendered;
F. A description of services provided;
G. The amount requested;
H. The P.O. Number; and
I. The total amount owed, if applicable.

The Successful Applicant must use the Invoice template provided by HHSC to identify costs being requested from HHSC. Costs must be broken out to a degree that is sufficient to determine if costs are reasonable, allowable, and necessary for the successful performance of the project, as indicated in Title 2, CFR, Part 200, and the Texas Grant Management Standards (**TxGMS**). Invoice supporting documentation may include but is not limited to: invoices, receipts, payroll documentation, subrecipient payment information, travel reimbursement requests, operational and equipment costs, etc. All supporting documentation must be organized by funding source and clearly labeled upon submission, and equal the amounts listed in the invoice.

All invoices must be submitted in accordance to the standards set forth in TAC §20.487. Disputed invoices will be immediately returned to the Contractor no later than the 21st day after the invoice is received. HHSC may accept a partial delivery of services and an invoice for payment of the portion of the services delivered. All undisputed invoices will be paid in accordance to the standards set forth in TAC §20.488.

The Successful Applicant shall submit a revised budget and request approval for budgetary adjustments exceeding 25% of the total allocation within each funding source. Such requests will only be processed twice in a contract year with the first budget revision allowed in the month of

November and the second budget revision allowed in the month of May. Budget revisions are due by the last business day of the specified month.

At the completion of the contract period, final payment shall be based on the information provided by the Successful Applicant within the time frame established by the contract or, if a timeline is not established within the contract, within sixty (60) days after the termination of the contract. This payment provision shall apply to final payment whether at the completion of the contract period or in the event of early contract termination.

## 7 TRANSITION PLAN

If a contract is offered, a final plan shall be submitted to HHSC within thirty (30) business days after execution of the contract. HHSC and the Successful Applicant shall work together throughout the Transition Phase to establish a detailed schedule for all activities and define expectations for the content and format of the contract transition deliverables. Ongoing plan updates and changes shall be submitted to HHSC for approval at least thirty (30) business days before a change becomes effective.

The Transition Plan shall include the following:

A. The identification of risks related to readiness for operations assumption, and a description of how those risks will be managed and mitigated.

B. Comprehensive and detailed step-by-step actions for successful transition of current operations from the current contractor to the awarded Applicant through collaboration facilitated by HHSC.

C. Activities the awarded Applicant shall conduct between the effective date of the contract and the Applicant's operational start date to ensure continuation of services to AIC customers.

D. Applicant's roles and responsibilities.

E. Detailed schedule of continued business operations for all transition functions and requirements.

## 8 TURNOVER PLAN

The following are the turnover requirements to which the Successful Applicant must agree. “Turnover” is defined as the required activities the successful Applicant must perform in order to transition contract operations to a subsequent entity or HHSC. At the commencement and during turnover, the Applicant must ensure that HHSC and consumer populations do not experience any adverse impact from the transfer of services to another entity or to HHSC.

If a contract is offered, the Successful Applicant shall be submit a final plan to HHSC within thirty (30) business days after execution of the contract. The Successful Applicant must also submit an Annual Operations Turnover Plan within sixty (60) calendar days prior to the end of each operational year of the contract. In addition, the Successful Applicant will submit a “ready to execute” Operations Turnover Plan six (6) months (180 days) prior to the end date of the contract or upon request by HHSC.

Turnover activities may include, but are not limited to:

A. The transfer of information (including data, if applicable); data entry or case file software (if utilized); third-party software and modifications (if utilized); documentation relating to software and interfaces; functional business process flows; and operational information pertaining to the delivery of services to consumers;

B. Transfer of all pertinent documentation (in written and electronic formats), including but not limited to policies and procedures, case files, spreadsheets, and reports;

C. Transfer of all training schedules and materials in electronic format including but not limited to: development methodology, curriculum materials, training class statistics, outcomes and documentation, materials in development and supporting documentation, best practice materials, all other training and curriculum development documentation and data related to the required training of AIC staff;

D. Any other information that would ensure a comprehensive and complete knowledge transfer to HHSC or successor entity of all components in the Request for Application (**RFA**) and the contract;

E. The implementation of a quality assurance process to monitor turnover activities; and

F. Training HHSC and/or successor entity staff in the operation of business processes and any supporting processes related to the RFA and the contract.

The Turnover Plan shall define the activities required through the end of the contract plus six months after the end of the contract. The Successful Applicant is required to keep, maintain, and share any knowledge learned during the AIC contract term to assist in avoiding potential pitfalls during turnover and facilitate a successful transition to the successor entity.

At a minimum, the Turnover Plan shall include the following:

A. Turnover approach;

B. Defined tasks and subtasks for the turnover, including staffing and resource requirements;

C. Turnover schedule;

D. List of all data, program, and consumer documentation and case files, including documentation maintenance and work currently in progress in the ADRC;

E. Current inventories, correspondence, documentation of outstanding issues, and other operations support documentation;

F. Staff training schedules and materials;

G. List of all employees through the Applicant, including hiring documentation, credentials (if applicable) and employment and payroll records.

H. Statement of resource requirements that must be met by a successor entity(ies) or HHSC to take over the program, including staffing and resource requirements necessary to perform the operations of the program;

I. Knowledge transfer to successor entity or HHSC; and

J. Any other information needed for an orderly transfer of services.

K. Upon notification by HHSC that turnover activities are required, the successful Applicant shall complete 100% of all turnover activities and obtain HHSC approval prior to final payment to the Applicant.

## 9 CONTRACT RECORD RETENTION

As indicated in **Exhibit C, HHSC Uniform Terms and Conditions-Grant**, the Successful Applicant will keep and maintain under the Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (**GAAP**) or the Governmental Accounting Standards Boards (**GASB**), as applicable, full, true, and complete records necessary to fully disclose to HHSC, the Texas State Auditor's Office, the United States Government, and their authorized representatives, sufficient information to determine compliance with the terms and conditions of this Contract and all state and federal rules, regulations, and statues. Unless otherwise specified in this Contract, the Successful Applicant will maintain legible copies of this Contract and all related documents for a minimum of seven (7) years after the termination of the contract period or seven (7) years after the completion of any litigation or dispute involving the Contract, whichever is later.

## 10 FORMAL COMMUNICATION REQUIREMENTS

The Successful Applicant must establish formal communication with HHSC for receipt and response to requests for information, high level estimates of costs, work products, ad hoc reports, deliverables, updates and other required correspondence related to performance of contract requirements. HHSC will issue State Action Requests (**SARs**) to the Successful Applicant following established procedures and timelines. The Successful Applicant will issue Vendor Action Requests (**VARs**) to HHSC following established procedures and timelines, inclusive of the submission of the Contract Deliverables and KPRs. The Applicant's proposal should describe how the Applicant will establish and manage formal communication with HHSC.

In addition to the requirements stated above, the Successful Applicant must:

A. Submit complete and accurate responses to any SAR or VAR memos no later than ten calendar days after the Successful Applicant's receipt of the request or by the date specified in the memo.
B. Submit written request for extension of a SAR or VAR deadline that specifies the estimated date of completion and reasons for the extension no later than three business days prior to the response due date.
C. The Successful Applicant must provide ad hoc reports and respond to Legislative inquiries and other high priority requests within 36 hours from the time of the request or by the date and/or time specified by HHSC.
D. If the Successful Applicant is late in responding, or does not provide adequate information, HHSC will assess non-compliance remedies.

HHSC's formal communication process will be utilized for the submission of all KPRs and Deliverable reports. HHSC provides comments and approval of each report provided in support of this agreement.

## 11 CONTRACT MONITORING REQUIREMENTS AND QUESTIONNAIRE

The Successful Applicant must comply with all applicable cost principles, audit and contract monitoring, and administrative requirements in accordance with the Contract, contract management guidelines, and state and federal regulations. To ensure compliance with these requirements, HHSC utilizes a risk-based contract monitoring process. The Contract Monitoring Questionnaire (**CMQ**) is part of the risk-based contract monitoring process and provides HHSC with detailed and ongoing information regarding the Successful Applicant's internal and financial controls and other general contracting processes.

In addition to the requirements stated above, the Successful Applicant must submit an initial CMQ within 30 calendar days after Contract execution and annually thereafter within 60 calendar days prior to the end of each State Fiscal Year.