



Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor

Homes and Community Renewal

RuthAnne Visnauskas, Commissioner/CEO

Request for Information for Section 8 Database Management System

RFI Issuance Date:

AUGUST 15, 2017

RFI Submission Deadline:

SEPTEMBER 29, 2017, 5PM EDT

HOUSING TRUST FUND CORPORATION

HAMPTON PLAZA

38-40 STATE STREET

ALBANY, NEW YORK 12207

www.nyshcr.org

RFI Submission Coversheet

Attach this form to the top of your submission.

DATE: _____

GENERAL INFORMATION ON FIRM:

Legal Name of Firm:

Mailing Address:

Website:

Main Telephone Number (including area code):

Federal Tax ID Number:

SEC Registration Number (if applicable):

MBE Registration Number (if applicable):

WBE Registration Number (if applicable):

MWBE Registration Number (if applicable):

SDVOB Registration Number (if applicable):

Is your Firm a Small Business Concern? ____ Yes ____ No

“**Small Business Concern**” means a business which is a resident in the State of New York, independently owned and operated, not dominant in its field and employs one hundred or less persons.

MAIN CONTACT INFORMATION FOR THIS SUBMISSION:

Please list the individual that will be the main contact *regarding this RFI submission*:

Contact Name:

Contact Telephone Number (including area code):

Contact E-mail Address:

Contact Facsimile Number (including area code):

HOUSING TRUST FUND CORPORATION
REQUEST FOR INFORMATION
FOR
SECTION 8 DATABASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

NOTE: THIS IS A REQUEST FOR INFORMATION AND IS NOT A SOLICITATION. HTFC RESERVES THE RIGHT TO USE INFORMATION RESULTING FROM THIS RFI PROCESS TO DEVELOP A FUTURE SOLICITATION.

1. Introduction

New York State Homes and Community Renewal (“**HCR**”) consists of all the major housing and community renewal agencies of the State of New York (“**State**” or “**NYS**”), including the Division of Housing and Community Renewal (“**DHCR**”) and the Housing Trust Fund Corporation (“**HTFC**”). HCR includes other State agencies not involved in this request for information (“**RFI**”) process. HTFC, a NYS public benefit corporation and public housing authority (“**PHA**”), administers over 44,000 Federal Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers (“**HCVs**”) across the State.

2. Overview of HTFC

HTFC was established in 1985 under Section 45-a of the State’s Private Housing Finance Law as a public benefit corporation. Its mission is to create decent affordable housing for persons of low income by providing loans and grants for the rehabilitation of existing housing or the construction of new housing. This mission has been expanded by the addition of many Federal and State programs.

Visit HTFC’s website at <http://www.nyshcr.org/> to learn more about the above HTFC programs and other HTFC programs not described in this RFI, but applicable to the Project Context detailed in Section 6 of this RFI.

Information on the Section 8 program can be found at:
<http://www.nyshcr.org/Programs/Section8HCV/>

3. Purpose

HTFC is seeking information from qualified firms or individuals (“**Vendors**” or “**Respondents**”) regarding potential options and strategies currently available in the marketplace for upgrading or replacing its current database system to track families who receive Section 8 Housing Choice

Vouchers through its Section 8 program (**the “Project”**). The current database system, known as the Statewide Housing Choice Voucher System (“**SHCVS**”), was built by State staff and collects data on Section 8 families and landlords. Data is collected and inputted by Agency staff and by external partners at 43 local not-for-profits, local governments, and private vendors who administer the program on HTFC’s behalf.

The purpose of this RFI is to gain knowledge regarding the full range of options available in the marketplace. HTFC may request to meet with Respondents following the RFI submission deadline, indicated in the Calendar of Events and Milestone section of this RFI, to ask additional questions and/or to seek a demonstration of products available. Responses will be used to gauge the level of interest in the Project described below, and may be used in the development of a future procurement solicitation, at HTFC’s discretion.

Respondents to this RFI will not be precluded from responding to any future request for proposal (“**RFP**”) process, and will not be given any additional consideration over vendors who have not submitted a response to this RFI. Contact information received from parties interested in this RFI will be retained to inform said interested parties regarding any information regarding a potential future procurement process. All materials submitted in response to this RFI shall become the property of HTFC.

HTFC will not be liable for any costs incurred by any Respondent pertaining to the preparation and submittal of any written response or for participation in a demonstration in response to this RFI. RFI Submissions are subject to disclosure under the under Public Officers Law Section 87 (“Freedom of Information Law Act”).

Since this RFI does not constitute a procurement, the restricted period under State Finance Law Sections 139j and 139k (the Procurement Lobbying Law) is not applicable. However, any future procurement resulting from the RFI will be subject to all applicable New York State requirements. Participation in this RFI, or any communication with State or HTFC Staff involved in this RFI, will in no way constitute a commitment by HTFC to award a future contract.

4. Calendar of Events and Milestones

This RFI is not a procurement. It is intended to gather information in anticipation of a potential future procurement. The timeline is as follows:

Event	Date
Issuance of RFI	August 15, 2017
Teleconference	On or about August 30, 2017 at 1pm, Eastern Daylight Time (“ EDT ”) (Teleconference information to be posted on HTFC’s webpage)
Question Submission Deadline	September 8, 2017

HTFC Responses to Questions	On or about September 15, 2017
RFI Submission Deadline	September 29, 2017, 5pm, EDT
Demonstrations (to be held at the discretion of HTFC)	Through the end of Calendar Year 2017

Vendors submitting a response to this RFI may be invited to provide a demonstration of their solution to HTFC staff. As this RFI is not a solicitation, demonstrations are not scored, but rather are used to gather a general understanding of capabilities and functionality of solutions in the industry.

HTFC reserves the right to modify this schedule at its discretion. Notification of changes in connection with this RFI will be made available to all interested parties via HTFC’s web page: <http://www.nyshcr.org/AboutUs/Procurement/HCR-Procurement.htm>. It is the responsibility of the Respondent to check the web site for notifications relating to this RFI.

5. Additional Information and Follow-up

5.1 Questions and Answers

Any questions or requests for clarification regarding this RFI must be submitted via email to contractunitinfo@nyshcr.org citing the RFI page and section, no later than the Question Submission Deadline indicated in the Calendar of Events and Milestones section in this RFI. The “Subject” line of the email should indicate “Questions - 2017 Database System Management RFI.” HTFC may post additional follow-up Questions and Answers to its [webpage](http://www.nyshcr.org/AboutUs/Procurement/HCR-Procurement.htm) at <http://www.nyshcr.org/AboutUs/Procurement/HCR-Procurement.htm> prior to the RFI Submission Deadline if it determines that additional clarification is needed.

HTFC also reserves the right to modify this RFI at any time, as necessary. Therefore, prospective RFI Respondents are strongly encouraged to check the above URL for updates throughout the RFI period.

6. Project Context

6.1 Overview

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (“**HUD**”) provides funding annually to HTFC through an Annual Contributions Contract (“**ACC**”) to administer Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers. Through this ACC Contract, HTFC makes housing assistance payments to landlords on behalf of over 44,000 extremely low and very low income families across New York State. HTFC administers vouchers in New York City primarily utilizing DHCR case management and inspection staff based in its downtown Manhattan office. In addition, HTFC contracts with 43 Local Administrators (“**LAs**”) who each serve as the entry point to the program in one or more of 54 counties. These LAs are not for profit organizations, local governments, or private vendors.

Each LA employs its own case managers and inspectors who perform intake and upload data into the central SHCVS database on a monthly basis. SHCVS collects information required to determine tenant eligibility, calculate rental subsidies, and verify payments to landlords. It provides a digital version of HUD's 50058 Form and other forms necessary to capture required tenant and landlord information.

6.2 The Current State

Created by former HCR staff now working at the New York State Office of Information Technology Services (“ITS”), the SHCVS database has grown considerably in the past several decades. It is maintained and hosted by ITS. The system is accessed directly by HCR employees through HCR's Intranet. Each of the LAs host a mirror version of the system on their own local network, and then upload data to the central system monthly.

SHCVS currently operates in PowerBuilder Version 12.5. This platform is no longer a part of ITS' strategic direction. The database system currently has five core functions:

1. Determine applicant eligibility, tabulate family income and calculate housing assistance payments, at least annually, utilizing the HUD 50058 form in accordance with HUD requirements;
2. Securely collect and store confidential tenant and landlord data;
3. Track applicants and determine their position on a Waiting List;
4. Generate IRS and other mandated reports, letters, and other required documents; and
5. Properly calculate the required funds to be received from HUD and disbursed through HTFC's banking partner to the landlords.

In addition, SHCVS also performs the following related tasks:

- a) Calculate and adjust utility allowances
- b) Error check on landlord payments and tax documents
- c) Track certifications and re-certifications for voucher recipients
- d) Maintain multiple wait lists
- e) Creates data to assist with updating HUD's Public and Indian Housing Center (“PIC”) system database
- f) Generate reports on waiting lists, utilization rates and landlord payments
- g) Creating payment files to draw funds
- h) Track repayment agreements, and help ensure timely entry of unpaid debts into Enterprise Income Verification (“EIV”) system database
- i) Track data for the program's Homeownership and Family Self-Sufficiency components
- j) Track waitlists and tenants in properties receiving Project Based Vouchers

Each tenant and landlord in the system is given a unique ID number. Data fields include highly sensitive personal information including bank account numbers, social security numbers, etc.

6.3 The Desired Future State

The specific solution for replacing SHCVS has yet to be determined. The new system must be able to process and store the data and documents collected from the LAs in real time, instead of monthly. It should provide a single, secure, and web-accessible database that will provide timely data on all applicants, voucher holders, and landlords. The system should also include up to date forms and features for handling direct deposits and managing the payment process. There should be sufficient fields to properly classify and analyze recipients and transactions.

In the future, HTFC will likely seek a Vendor who can provide a comprehensive data solution, including the development and creation of the new database, implementation, and ongoing technical support, maintenance and upgrades. Ongoing technical support will be needed for both State staff and LA employees. [The implementation of the proposed solution for HTFC must adhere to the Statewide technology policies and guidelines set standards and define best practices for the State's IT community, hyperlinked herein.](#)

Our goal is to re-imagine and rebuild a comprehensive database and tracking system that will securely deliver the required functions necessary to meet federal requirements while helping HTFC to strategically and efficiently manage the program statewide.

In addition to maintaining and improving the functions currently possible in SHCVS, as listed in Section 6.2, HTFC will also seek to add new features in a future system. These features may include:

1. Enhanced searches for families and landlords by name, address, phone number, etc.;
2. Creation of data folders with a comprehensive history of each family and landlord;
3. Searching and sorting of waitlist names and files among counties and PBV properties;
4. Collecting and analyzing rent data for rent reasonableness testing;
5. Generating automatic alerts for key milestones such as inspections and re-certifications;
6. Importing data from other applications for Quality Control and Inspections;
7. Geocoding tenant and landlord data and utilizing GIS technology to analyze housing trends by county and by region; and
8. Data analysis to identify potential fraud, housing discrimination, and other risks.

Objectives of the new system will include:

- a) Ensure the security of all tenant and landlord data;
- b) Completely eliminate or drastically reduce the volume of paper records being stored at HCR and at our LAs, using a secure file manager that will collect and organize tenant and landlord documents in a well-organized, easy-to-use digital environment;
- c) Integrate into other current and future state and HUD systems operating within the program, including the EIV and PIC databases, as well as other various systems for managing financial transactions between the bank(s), HTFC Finance, landlords, and tenant voucher recipients;
- d) Provide a web-based interface that will allow the LAs to enter data directly into the system in real time, eliminating the need for decentralized data storage;
- e) Provide a more automated control environment that will limit the opportunity for error in the payment process;

- f) Maintain a high level of customer service beyond the implementation of the new database through an ongoing strategy to provide accessible and user friendly technical support for all system users; and
- g) Allow for a robust collection of client data that can more easily be aggregated and analyzed to see trends and proactively identify risks; Geocoding of data for mapping purposes would be ideal.

Desired outcomes for this project may include:

- I. Reduced risk and greater security in storing tenant and landlord data, including personal identification information;
- II. Reduced paper and other waste from hard copy document storage;
- III. Reduced administrative costs and/or increased staff time available for direct client interaction and assistance – i.e. an improved customer experience; and
- IV. Minimal service disruption throughout the transition from the old system to the new one.

7. RFI Submission

Responses must be delivered by email no later than the RFI Submission Deadline and time indicated in the “*Calendar of Events and Milestones*” section of this RFI to contractunitinfo@nyshcr.org, with the subject line of the email labeled “2017 Section 8 Database System Management RFI.” The content in the RFI Submission Narrative must be no more than ten letter-size pages (single or double spaced, minimum 12-point font, and at least one inch margins). HTFC reserves the right to accept late responses at its sole discretion.

RFI Submissions must be submitted by email to contractunitinfo@nyshcr.org in searchable portable document format (“**PDF**”) compatible with Adobe Reader XI. HTFC will not accept discs, flash drives, or FTP file references that require downloading information from the Vendor’s or a third party’s website. If the file is large, it may be submitted in multiple email attachments, with the proper Part One or Part Two label (if applicable) and “1 of X”, “2 of X”, etc., and the last email as “X of X – Final”. All submissions shall become the property of HTFC.

8. Contents of RFI Submission

8.1 RFI Submission Coversheet & Cover Letter

A complete response includes a fully completed RFI Submission Coversheet, Cover Letter and RFI Submission Narrative that is responsive to the requirements in the below sections. The Respondent’s cover letter should not exceed 10 pages and will summarize your firm’s demonstrated experience with projects of similar size and scope in relation to the Project Context specified in Section 6 of this RFI.

8.2 RFI Submission Narrative

HTFC seeks, through this RFI, to gain a more thorough understanding of our options for replacing the SHCVS database. In doing so, HTFC seeks to better understand:

8.2.1 Market Information

1. Who are the most qualified and experienced Vendors in building and maintaining databases specifically for Section 8, and/or for other, related federal or state affordable rental housing programs?
2. What types of Custom Off-the-Shelf (“COTS”) products already exist and are currently in use in the marketplace? Could those products meet the unique challenges that go with managing a large, statewide Section 8 program through a diverse network of geographically-based Local Administrators?
3. What would it take to build a database from the ground up specifically for HTFC’s Section 8 program? How would the functionality of such a database compare with one built using a COTS product?
4. What type of pricing structures are most common in creating and maintaining such a database?
5. What information would your firm need to see in a potential solicitation that would help your firm provide a comprehensive proposal? Please be as specific as possible.
6. Please provide the length of term your firm recommends for implementing a system in a future potential contract. Please explain why your company recommends the proposed term.

8.2.2 Experience

Please describe your firm and its experience in providing the services described in this RFI. Where possible, provide the following information:

1. Provide a brief overview of your firm, including organizational structure, history, current staffing, and recent accomplishments.
2. Describe any past or current contracts within the past five years, starting in Calendar Year 2013, which are relevant to this project. Where possible, provide: (i) the name and location of the contracting entity; (ii) the type of entity (State PHA, Local PHA, local government, private, etc.); (iii) the dates of the engagement; and (iv) the services provided.
3. Describe the database products offered by your firm that might meet the needs described in this RFI. How long has your firm offered these products, and how were they developed?
4. Describe any best practices or innovative techniques that were learned and/or applied in building or maintaining those products that may be useful in achieving the outcomes listed in this RFI.
5. From your work on similar projects and based on the information provided in this RFI, identify and describe the greatest challenges and risk points to HTFC in a future procurement and implementation of a new SHCVS platform.

8.2.3 Possible Approach

Please describe, to the extent possible, how your firm might approach the project described in this RFI. Specifically, please speak to the following questions:

8.2.3.1 Products

1. What types of database products are offered by your firm, and how have these products been applied to Section 8 and/or other federal or state housing programs?

2. Provide a detailed description of the platform and system requirements of the system you would offer?
3. How would the database you would build be hosted? New York State has its own, centralized data center. Are your databases typically hosted by you or by your customers? Where you host the database, what type of security protocols are in place to protect sensitive information?
4. To what extent can your database products be adjusted and reconfigured to meet changing needs and requirements?
5. What other recommendations would you have for HTFC based on past best practices and lessons learned?
6. In the attachments section, provide any relevant flow charts or diagrams of how your system might be configured.

8.2.3.2 Service

1. To what extent does your firm maintain the database systems you have built?
2. What type of Help Desk assistance do you offer? Do you currently maintain a call center? Include your recommendation for roles and responsibilities of both HTFC and Vendor staff.
3. What is your process for making future modifications? Describe the process for improving and updating your product and/or solution. Include client involvement in your response.
4. Describe any problems encountered when implementing and using your application.
5. Describe your firm's implementation services required for a successful solution implementation.

8.2.3.3 Cost and Timing

1. Describe the approach and methodology for pricing of your proposed database solution. How would you price the creation and implementation of the database described in this RFI? Would your pricing be based on time and materials, fixed cost deliverables, or another methodology?
2. Would you be willing to also bid on an ongoing maintenance component? If so, how would that service be priced, and what type of response time could HTFC expect?
3. How long would it take to design, build and implement the database. If possible, provide a timeline in the Attachments Section.

PLEASE NOTE: HTFC does not expect to receive a bid price in response to this RFI, and any timeline submitted will not be binding on either HTFC or the Vendor.

8.2.3.4 Availability

1. Would your firm be willing to bid on this project were it to be competitively procured within the next 12 months? How soon after the award of contract would your firm be able to start?

9. Glossary

ACC – Annual Contributions Contract

DHCR – New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal

EIV – Enterprise Income Verification

GIS – Geographic Information Systems

HUD – U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

ITS – New York State Office of Information Technology Services

HCR – New York State Homes and Community Renewal

HCV – Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers (sometimes referred to as just Section 8)

HTFC – New York State Housing Trust Fund Corporation

PIC-NG – The Cloud-based system upgrade to HUD’s Public and Indian Housing Information Center (PIC), currently under development to improve the design and streamline the collection of tenant and HCV data.

SHCVS – Statewide Housing Choice Voucher System

PHA – Public Housing Authority

RFI – Request for Information

RFP – Request for Proposals