

Q	Bidder Question	DHS Answer	Section	Pg.
1.	Who is the NJ 988 Managing Entity? What is their role with the 988 Lifeline Centers?	<p><i>Carelon Behavioral Health (Carelon) has been contracted by DMHAS as the NJ 988 Managing Entity.</i></p> <p><i>Carelon is responsible for Lifeline center oversight, support, and data collection and reporting. Carelon facilitates regular meetings with the Lifeline centers and ensures centers are meeting expectations as set forth by NJ DMHAS, SAMHSA and Vibrant. Carelon will also provide some required trainings to Lifeline center staff.</i></p>	IV. Contract Scope of Work	7
2.	What is the timeline to achieve a 90% answer rate? Does this have to be achieved in year 1 and then maintained every year thereafter or will a plan to get to that rate within a few years be acceptable? What is the maximum amount of time we must get to that rate?	<p><i>The objective is to achieve and maintain a 90% response rate for calls, chats, and texts. There is no specified time frame for accomplishing this objective; however, the aim is to attain this rate as soon as possible and sustain it throughout the grant period.</i></p>	I. Purpose and Intent VII. Required Proposal Content – Project Description	3 12
3.	What happens if a center does not reach a 90% answer rate?	<p><i>This grant award includes the expectation of a 90% answer rate for every 988 Lifeline center. Center leadership and Carelon, in consultation with DMHAS, would review strategies for increasing answer rate with the goal of reaching 90% as soon as possible.</i></p>	I. Purpose and Intent VII. Required Proposal Content Purpose and Intent	3 12
4.	How will changes in the overall Lifeline system or mandated programs by the State of NJ, over which we have no control, be considered in reviewing a center’s progress toward the 90% goal and/or other benchmarks? For example, the launch of the Bamboo platform may impact our answer rate initially.	<p><i>DMHAS understands that a variety of factors may impact each center’s ability to reach the goal of a 90% answer rate. These include but are not limited to: speed of recruiting/hiring and training new staff, new technology (Bamboo platform) and new programming (Mobile Crisis Outreach Response Teams/MCORT).</i></p> <p><i>If a center is having difficulty reaching the 90% benchmark, Carelon, in consultation with DMHAS, would meet with Center leadership to review strategies for increasing answer rate with the goal of reaching 90% as soon as possible.</i></p>	I. Purpose and Intent VII. Required Proposal Content Purpose and Intent	3 12

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5.	Will agencies that utilize call center staff outside NJ be considered under this RFP?	<i>Yes, DMHAS will consider submissions that include staff outside of NJ in the context of the entire proposal AND if the Award recipients and their staff meet Vibrant's minimum operational performance standards for the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. (See Minimum Standards for Applying to Join the 988 Lifeline Network)</i>	IV. Contract Scope of Work. (Minimum Standards for Applying to Join the 988 Lifeline Network.	7
6.	As a current Lifeline center, we already have defined primary and backup counties for which we are responsible. How will the decision be made regarding which center will be responsible for which counties?	<i>As stated in the RFP: "Each center must choose county(ies) for which they will provide primary coverage and, if desired, county(ies) for backup coverage as well. Calls, chats and texts are routed to the designated primary coverage center based on the individual's county, area-code or zip code." If adjustments to the chosen counties must be made, Carelon will discuss and resolve this matter with the relevant centers.</i>	I. Purpose and Intent II. Background and Population to be Served	3 4-5
7.	How will the funds be paid out for the 8/1/24-6/30/24 RFP? Lump sum at the beginning or end? Equal monthly amounts? Starting when?	<i>NOTE: DMHAS believes the question intended to say: "How will the funds be paid out for the 8/1/24-6/30/25 RFP?" <not 6/30/24></i> <i>Following contract negotiations, and dependent on the availability of funds (approved State FY25 budget), grant funding will be made in equal monthly payments through a cost-based contract unless the successful bidder is already receiving invoice-based reimbursement with the DMHAS. Note: In a cost-based contract model, unexpended funds are returned to DMHAS at the end of the contract period.</i> <i>Start-up (one-time) costs included in the proposal should be necessary and reasonable. Once an award is made, the amount available for these costs will be discussed as part of the contract negotiations.</i>	V. General Contracting Information VII. Required Proposal content. Budget	5 15-16
8.	The RFP is billed as capacity building but it is renewable annually for 5 years. Are we building capacity in year 1 and maintaining in the	<i>The goal of this funding is to enable NJ Lifeline centers to respond to at least 90% of calls and/or chats/texts routed to their center through the 988 Lifeline network.</i>	I. Purpose and Intent V. General Contracting Information	3 9

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	<p>future? Or, are we adding to our capacity every year? If the latter, how does this work if the funding remains steady over 5 years? Our staffing needs are likely to change from year to year. How is this considered if the budget is the same every year? The same question applies to new/additional technology needs in the later years. Do we have to submit a plan/budget every year?</p>	<p><i>Prospective bidders are required to enhance their capacity in the beginning of the project to effectively achieve and maintain the objectives throughout the contract. Bidders are expected to furnish a comprehensive outline in their budget and scope of work detailing how the recruitment of new staff and/or implementation of technology can be scaled up to reach and maintain this goal.</i></p> <p><i>Agencies will not be expected to submit new plans each year although revision of plans and/or budgets may be requested if there are substantial changes in either.</i></p>	<p>VII. Required Proposal Content - Project Description Budget</p>	<p>12 14-15</p>
<p>9.</p>	<p>Is there a minimum or maximum we can ask for?</p>	<p><i>There is no limit to the amount an agency may request. As stated in the RFP, "DMHAS will consider the cost efficiency of your proposed budget as it relates to the contract scope of work."</i></p> <p><i>Proposals should request the amount necessary to expand services to meet the 90% answer rate for their counties and maintain expanded services throughout the contract. Agencies must justify the amount requested through their proposal and detailed budget/narrative.</i></p>	<p>1. Purpose and Intent VII. Required Proposal Content - Budget</p>	<p>3 15-16</p>
<p>10.</p>	<p>In Section V. it states "In no case shall DMHAS continue funding when service commencement commitments are not met, and in no case shall funding be provided for a period of non-service provision in excess of three (3) months." Does this mean that if we don't hire staff within 30 days we will not get funding? Similarly, does this mean if we are shut down for 3 months (that is, take no crisis calls), we will not continue to get funding? Is</p>	<p><i>Bidders are responsible for establishing a staffing structure that meets their contractual obligations. While building a suitable staff complement can present challenges, it is important that the scope of work outlined in the contract establishes a reasonable timeframe for commencing the required tasks.</i></p> <p><i>There is no requirement that staffing be hired within 30 days. However, the expectation is that once an award is made, the timeline for beginning services funded by this award should not exceed three months.</i></p> <p><i>The service rendered through this RFP is the answering of calls and/or chats and texts</i></p>	<p>V. General Contracting Information VII. Required Proposal Content - Staffing</p>	<p>9-10 14-15</p>

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	<p>there any other definition of “non-service” we should be aware of?</p>	<p><i>for the 988 Lifeline Network in NJ. Non-service would be a center not performing this task.</i></p> <p><i>As stated in the RFP, if a contracted center is not able to provide this service for a period in excess of three months, funds provided pursuant to this agreement shall be returned to DMHAS.</i></p>		
<p>11.</p>	<p>Project Description #8. Is this referring to our overall training or is it specific to follow-up?</p>	<p><i>This is referring to your overall training.</i></p>	<p>VII. Required Proposal Content. Project Description</p>	<p>12</p>
<p>12.</p>	<p>Project Description #19 and #20. Can you explain what these two questions are referring to? We are a 988-call center. We do not have a facility and we do not admit patients.</p>	<p><i>Proposals should address any agency policies that require serving all individuals who are routed to the center from 988 including those who take legitimately prescribed medications.</i></p> <p><i>For example, if a caller is currently receiving Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) and requests assistance to continue, or a caller wants to initiate MAT, contact center polices support this.</i></p> <p><i>If policies do not specially state this, make the point that a policy that serves everyone would include this population as well. Proposals can also make the point that call centers do not offer in-person services and therefore do not have consumers who “present for admission.”</i></p>	<p>VII. Required Proposal Content - Project Description</p>	<p>13</p>
<p>13.</p>	<p>Outcomes and Evaluations #5-8. Is the expectation that we will be creating, implementing and evaluating our own program or participating in a survey created and administered by DMHAS, SAMHSA, or Carelon?</p>	<p><i>Certain evidence-based evaluation tools will be utilized by DMHAS through the Bamboo data management platform (e.g., Lifeline Assessment and/or Columbia Suicide-Severity Rating Scale). Also, DMHAS will develop a survey to be sent out (with consumer consent) after each contact with 988.</i></p> <p><i>However, provider agencies may develop and implement evaluation tools to measure goals and outcomes as part of improving</i></p>	<p>VII. Required Proposal Content - Outcomes and Evaluation</p>	<p>14</p>

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		<i>performance associated with this project. These tools may be developed internally or by an external agency.</i>		
14.	Staffing #1. Does “proposed program team” mean crisis counselors, administrative staff, or both?	<i>Both. The “proposed program team” outlines the composition of the entire staff necessary to fulfill the requirements of this project.</i>	VII. Required Proposal Content - Staffing	14
15.	Staffing #3. Will we be expected to hire Certified Peer Counselors?	<i>The hiring of Certified Peer Counselors (CPCs) is encouraged throughout the 988 system. Having lived experience and having knowledge of service delivery and its corresponding processes provides them with an ‘advantage’ of being in a better position to step into another’s shoes and be truly empathetic to their clients’ or patients’ needs and vulnerabilities.¹ DMHAS recognizes that this may be a new category of employees for 988 Lifeline centers and that responding to crisis contacts requires specialized skills and training.</i> <i>With this in mind, the successful bidder will describe their efforts to ensure workforce diversity and inclusion in the recruiting, hiring, and retention of staff who are from the targeted population, which includes trained and Certified Peer Counselors.</i>	VII. Required Proposal Content-Staffing	14
16.	Budget #5. What are “clinical consultants”?	<i>A clinician who is called upon to analyze situations and provide expert advice to address various needs or concerns such as a consulting psychiatrist. These would be professionals outside of the required program staff (crisis counselors, supervisors, program directors).</i>	VII. Required Proposal Content - Budget	16
17.	Budget #8. How is this applicable to a 988-call center? We listen to callers, engage with Mobile Crisis if needed, and work with stabilization centers. How are we “providers” billing for Medicaid?	<i>This description pertaining to Medicaid and Medicaid billing might not be relevant to your facility at this time. However, if DMHAS decides to add Medicaid Administrative Claiming (MAC), all centers would need to become Medicaid providers.</i> <i>MAC is a program that reimburses states for administrative activities that support Medicaid services. These activities include identifying and enrolling eligible clients, bringing them services covered by Medicaid, removing barriers to accessing</i>	VII. Required Proposal Content - Budget	16

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		<i>Medicaid services and reducing gaps in Medicaid services.</i>		
18.	Required Attachments #8. Does “current fiscal year” refer to the agency’s fiscal year or the state’s fiscal year? Please confirm if we can submit a financial statement for fiscal year 2023 (ending 12/31) or if we need to submit balance sheet, income statement and cash flows for the period 1/1/2024 - 3/31/2024.	<i>Audited financial statements are based upon your agency’s fiscal year. Please submit your organization’s most recent two (2) audited financial statements as well as an interim income statement, balance sheet and cash flows for the period 1/1/2024 - 3/31/2024.</i>	VII. Required Proposal Content. Required Attachments	17
19.	XI. Post Award #15. Are volunteers included on this form or just paid staff?	<i>Since Volunteers are not employees, it is not necessary to include them on this form.</i>	XI. Post Award Required Documentation	15
20.	In submitting the RFP, should our answers include the item numbers and/or the text of the question, or is a narrative presented in the same order as the questions in the RFP acceptable?	<i>Please present narrative in the same order as the RFP. Item numbers are very helpful for the reviewers but are not required. It is not necessary to repeat the text of the questions. Thank you for asking.</i>	VII. Required Proposal Content	10-16
21.	The RFP indicates that the new NJ 988 contracts will go into effect on August 1, 2024. However, the current contract expires on April 29, 2024—leaving a three-month gap where there is no contract or agreement in place for centers. Will there be additional funding for centers that wish to continue to provide service as an interim NJ 988 Telephone/Chat and Text center? If so, what will the funding opportunities be exactly for this duration? Would crisis counselors	<i>Information about this has been and/or will be provided to all current centers directly and individually. Transition to the Bamboo data platform will be required of all 988 Lifeline centers beginning on the “Go Live” date. Information about and training for the Bamboo platform will be addressed in ongoing meetings of the current 988 Lifeline centers.</i>	NA	

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	need to adhere to the Bamboo platform?			
22.	On page 3 of the RFP, under section I, the total annualized funding is \$10 million (subject to State appropriations). What are the factors that will determine what the appropriations will be for a given crisis center?	<i>Comprehensive information provided in the bidder's proposal will be reviewed and scored by a Review Committee (see page 19 for details). Information regarding issues including but not limited to staffing expansion, hiring practices, infrastructure, technology, and technology expansion, training, and any tools using evidence-based practices, will be important in determining the scoring of proposal and allocation of funds.</i>	I. Purpose and Intent IX. Review of Proposals	3 19-20
23.	Since the funding appropriation is \$10 million to be disbursed throughout all the participating NJ 988 crisis centers, what is the maximum dollar amount in terms of a proposed budget that a crisis center may procure for consideration?	<i>There is no limit to the amount an agency may request. As stated in the RFP, "DMHAS will consider the cost efficiency of your proposed budget as it relates to the proposed scope of work."</i> <i>Proposals should request the amount necessary to expand services to meet the 90% answer rate for their counties and maintain expanded services throughout the contract. Agencies must justify the amount requested through their proposal and detailed budget/narrative.</i>	I. Purpose and Intent VII. Required Proposal Content - Budget	3 15-16
24.	Will the new NJ 988 contract be a fee-for-service model or a reimbursement model?	<i>The contracts awarded for this RFP will be on a cost-based model. This means that following contract negotiations, and dependent on the availability of funds (approved State FY25 budget), grant funding will be made in equal monthly payments unless the bidding agency is already on an invoice-based reimbursement system. Note: In a cost-based contract model, unexpended funds are returned to DMHAS at the end of the contract period.</i>	V. General Contracting Information	9-10
25.	Can you provide us with an estimate of how many crisis centers will be approved to participate in the new contract? How many crisis centers in total is DMHAS looking to employ?	<i>This funding opportunity offers a total of \$10 million annually. Funding will be for multiple 988 Lifeline centers of which up to three (3) will operate 24 hours a day, every day of the Year. DMHAS plans to contract with as many centers as necessary to meet the goal</i>	I. Purpose and Intent	3

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		<i>of responding to at least 90% of the calls, texts and chats routed to NJ.</i>		
26.	Will there be a minimum requirement of hours/days that a crisis center will need to commit to in its capacity-building plan for this new contract?	<p><i>No, there is no minimum time requirement for centers to provide services. However, bidders are required to establish a staffing structure that meets their contract commitments including the goal of answering 90% of contacts routed to their agency.</i></p> <p><i>Agencies must define the minimum and/or maximum hours and days in compliance with state employment regulations.</i></p>	I. Purpose and Intent	3
27.	Can crisis centers apply to participate to only facilitate chat and text or apply to handle only a telephone program?	<p><i>Yes. Funding for this award can be used to recruit, hire, train, and pay direct service personnel who respond to calls only, to chats and texts only, or to calls, chats and texts.</i></p>	I. Purpose and Intent	3
28.	On page three (3) of the RFP, under section I, it states that "...bidders will need to identify any other sources of funding, both in-kind and monetary, that will be used." Is there a minimum required amount that needs to be provided to be considered?	<p><i>No. There is not a minimum required amount of other funding to submit a proposal for the RFP.</i></p>	I. Purpose and Intent	3
29.	On page six (6) of the RFP, under section III, it states that "...bidder must have all outstanding 'Plans of Correction' for deficiencies submitted." Where can crisis centers find the guidelines for these "Plans of Correction" and what does DMHAS consider corrective actions that need to be addressed?	<p><i>A Plan of Correction is established when an agency is not upholding requirements as set out in their contract. NJ DMHAS will provide the agency with a notice of the deficiency(ies) at which time, the agency will be asked to develop a Plan of Correction. This plan should demonstrate what adjustments will be made to achieve compliance in a timely manner.</i></p> <p><i>If you have not been notified that a Plan of Correction is warranted for your agency, then you should consider yourself in good standing with the Division.</i></p>	III. Who Can Apply?	6
30.	On page eight (8) of the RFP, under section IV, it states that "Any additional data requested by Vibrant,	<p><i>Current data requirements are identified in this section and include: SAMHSA Key Performance Indicators (KPIs); SAMHSA Infrastructure, Prevention and Promotion</i></p>	IV. Contract Scope of Work	8

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	<p>SAMHSA, or NJ DMHAS may be requested.” Can you provide some examples of the type of data that may be requested?</p>	<p><i>Indicators (IPPs); Demographic information; follow-up contacts required and completed; disposition of the individuals served; referrals made; information about number of people using mental health services after referral.</i></p> <p><i>Occasionally additional requests for data are made (e.g., one month of weekly data to determine if there was a “spike” of contacts following a local weather-related disaster).</i></p>		
<p>31.</p>	<p>On page nine (9) of the RFP, under section V, it states that “Actual funding levels will depend on the availability of funds and satisfactory performance.” What constitutes “satisfactory performance?”</p>	<p><i>Satisfactory performance pertains to an agency’s ability to adhere to the Contract Scope of Work as outlined in the RFP. However, DMHAS recognizes that there will be a start-up period to reach commitment levels and that extenuating circumstances may make it difficult to sustain full compliance with contracted levels of service at all times. Therefore, “satisfactory performance” will be determined by an ongoing conversation between DMHAS and the agency.</i></p>	<p>V. General Contracting Information IV. Contract Scope of Work</p>	<p>9 7</p>
<p>32.</p>	<p>With the advent of the new Bamboo platform, there will be an important need for training for counselors and support workers. DMHAS had previously indicated that there would be funding to offset the cost of training for the counselors, support workers, and relevant staff. Will this still be the case? If so, how much funding will the crisis centers receive? And, when will the funding be disbursed?</p>	<p><i>Funding for training on the Bamboo platform will be addressed with the five current 988 Lifeline centers in a different format.</i></p>	<p>NA</p>	
<p>33.</p>	<p>On page 10 of the RFP, under section V, it states that “In no case shall DMHAS continue funding when service commencement commitments are not met...” Can you please</p>	<p><i>Service commencement commitments are those commitments as outlined in the proposed Contract Scope of Work in the RFP.</i></p> <p><i>Bidders are responsible for establishing a staffing structure that meets their contractual obligations. While building a</i></p>	<p>V. General Contracting Information IV. Contract Scope of Work</p>	<p>9-10 7</p>

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	define what is meant by “service commencement commitments?”	<i>suitable staff complement can present challenges, it is important that the scope of work outlined in the contract establishes a reasonable timeframe for commencing the required tasks.</i>		
34.	If “service commencement commitments” are not met, and a center will subsequently not receive funding from DMHAS, will the crisis center still be expected to operate— placing a financial burden and onus on the crisis center to pay for the costs of the program for the remainder of the contract?	<p><i>If a center is not meeting the commitments as outlined in this RFP, NJ DMHAS will provide ample notification and request a Plan of Correction to remediate deficiencies. NJ DMHAS will work with the agency to provide technical assistance and explore all potential paths forward before discontinuing funding.</i></p> <p><i>A 988 Lifeline center holds its service contract with Vibrant Emotional Health. If NJ DMHAS funding is discontinued due to noncompliance with contract commitments, their contract with DMHAS becomes null and void and it is up to the agency whether or not they continue providing 988 services without State funding.</i></p>	V. General Contracting Information	9-10
35.	The NJ 988 Chat & Text program is separate from the NJ 988 Telephone program. If we wish to manage both the chat and text and telephone programs, would we need to submit two (2) separate RFPs? One RFP for chat and text, and one RFP for telephone?	<p><i>An agency should submit a single proposal that addresses all services they plan to provide. Within that proposal, the agency should identify the two programs in sections of the proposal where information might differ (e.g., staffing, budget, etc.).</i></p> <p><i>NOTE: The page limit for this proposal remains the same.</i></p>	IV. Contract Scope of Work	7
36.	On page seven (7) of the RFP it states, “The successful bidder will establish and maintain an affiliation agreement with the NJ 988 Managing Entity, Carelon Behavioral Health.” Where do we find the Affiliation Agreement wording? Is this Affiliation Agreement the same as the Carelon BAA?	<p><i>The bidding agency should provide written assurance that they will establish and maintain an affiliation agreement with Carelon. It is anticipated that an affiliation agreement will be provided by Carelon to agencies upon their final award notice.</i></p>	IV. Contract Scope of Work	7

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37.	Is there a limit on amount we can be funded? Or is it based solely on our cost projections?	<p><i>There is no limit to the amount an agency may request. As stated in the RFP, "DMHAS will consider the cost efficiency of your proposed budget as it relates to the contract scope of work."</i></p> <p><i>Proposals should request the amount necessary to expand services to meet the 90% answer rate for their counties and maintain expanded services throughout the contract. Agencies must justify the amount requested through their proposal and detailed budget/narrative.</i></p>	<p>I. Purpose and Intent</p> <p>VII. Required Proposal Content - Budget</p>	<p>3</p> <p>15-16</p>
38.	After the first year can the budget be increased?	<p><i>Annualized funding is based on the presumption that State funding will be at current levels. As mentioned in the RFP, "Actual funding levels will depend on the availability of funds..." but agencies should plan on level funding throughout the contract period and any contract extensions.</i></p> <p><i>As stated in the RFP, "The contract may be renewed annually under the existing terms for up to five (5) years at DMHAS' sole discretion and with the agreement of the successful bidder."</i></p>	V. General Contracting Information	9
39.	What are the variables and reasons for renewing every year for 5 years vs not?	<p><i>DMHAS prefers to maintain continuity of service whenever an agency is successful in meeting service commitments and funding is available. Therefore, contract renewals will be based on the awarded agency's ability to successfully meet service commitments as well as available State funding.</i></p>	V. General Contracting Information	9
40.	Can the original budget be revised to reflect the cost of inflation for subsequent terms?	<p><i>Budgets will be dependent upon the availability of State funds and will be discussed during annual contract renewals. However, agencies should plan on level funding throughout the contract period and any contract extensions.</i></p>	V. General Contracting Information	9
41.	Is application for money to support technological needs a one and done request or can this be requested yearly?	<p><i>As stated in the RFP, "Funding can also be used to develop, manage and maintain infrastructure, including technology requirements, to ensure successful response to the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. Budgeting should include funds for initial</i></p>	I. Purpose and Intent	3

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		<p><i>technology or technology expansion and to establish strong cybersecurity for the center's system."</i></p> <p><i>Proposals should include one-time costs for items that do not recur. Technological needs that require ongoing payment such as security subscriptions or access costs should be included in your detailed annual budget/narrative.</i></p> <p><i>Budgets will be dependent upon the availability of State funds and will be discussed during annual contract renewals. However, agencies should plan on level funding throughout the contract period and any contract extensions.</i></p>		
42.	<p>Are administrative salaries capped at a certain percentage or is any amount of their salary allowable?</p>	<p><i>Salary compensation limitations are addressed in the Department of Human Service's Standard Language Document for Social Service and Training Contracts (SLD). See sections 5.16, 5.17, 5.18 and 5.19 on page 17 for details.</i></p> <p>DHS Standard Language Document (scroll down and click on Contracting Resources for access to the SLD)</p> <p><i>In addition, as stated in the RFP, "DMHAS will consider the cost efficiency of your proposed budget as it relates to the contract scope of work." Agencies must justify the amount requested through their proposal and detailed budget/narrative.</i></p>	VII. Required Proposal Content	15
43.	<p>(Page 14, 2nd paragraph) What is the definition and/or example of "or have had experience working for this population" for the position?</p>	<p><i>Staffing for this project should include an effort to hire individuals that have experience working with individuals experiencing serious emotional distress, suicidal crisis and/or experiencing a crisis due to an addiction.</i></p>	VII. Required Proposal Content	14
44.	<p>Should currently funded NJ 988 providers apply for their current funding levels as part of this RFP- or only for additional funding for expansion of their current services.</p>	<p><i>The current funding for 988 Lifeline center operations will be discontinued. Therefore, current centers wanting to maintain funding for current services should apply for those funds as well as additional funds for expansion through this RFP.</i></p>	I. Purpose and Intent	3

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45.	Should we assume that if our grant is approved it may be subject to contract negotiations that could impact on the contract ceiling, staffing and hours/days of operation.	<i>Yes. As stated in the RFP, "the contract award may be conditional upon final contract and budget negotiation." All agencies notified of a preliminary award will participate in contract negotiation with NJ DMHAS before a final award is made. The goal of this negotiation is mutual agreement on all aspects of the contract including, but not limited to, budget, staffing and hours/days of operation.</i>	IX. Review of Proposals	20
46.	Are we required in the RFP to project a specific number reflecting the capacity of calls to be answered within the 90% threshold?	<i>A specific projection is not required. However, bidders must justify how their requested funding will allow them to reach a 90% answer rate given their operating hours and counties of coverage.</i>	I. Purpose and Intent	3
47.	Will text/chat still be part of the national Vibrant Platform? If so, will text/chat have access to the Bamboo- to be utilized to support NJ text/chat individuals for information/referral, and/or crisis response	<i>As stated in the RFP, "Agencies awarded funding for calls, chats, and texts will be required to utilize the Crisis and Open Beds Modules of the data management platform developed by Bamboo Health." For the foreseeable future, agencies responding to texts/chats will be required to utilize Vibrant's Unified Platform to receive these contacts. However, data will need to be entered into the Bamboo platform for information management in New Jersey. Therefore, the Bamboo platform, including resources and referral information, will be available for those who contact 988 by text and chat.</i>	IV. Contract Scope of Work	8
48.	Will text/chat be limited to NJ? Will text/chat be distributed statewide or by county?	<i>Funds from this RFP are to be used only for chats/texts initiated in-state. At this time, texts/chats are routed by area code/IP address.</i>	IV. Contract Scope of Work	7
49.	Will NJ text/chat require any special data collection? How will we have access to text/chat data for analysis?	<i>Data requirements are identified in the Contract Scope of Work and include: SAMHSA Key Performance Indicators (KPIs); SAMHSA Infrastructure, Performance and Prevention Indicators (IPPs); Demographic information; follow-up contacts required and completed; disposition of the individuals served; referrals made; information about number of people using mental health services after referral. As with phone call data, text/chat data will be collected through the Bamboo Crisis</i>	IV. Contract Scope of Work	8

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		<i>module and each Lifeline center will have access to its own data for analysis.</i>		
50.	Is there any requirement that individuals with behavioral health life experience be employed by the project?	<i>There is no specific requirement. Bidders are requested to describe their efforts to recruit, hire, train and retain staff who are Certified Peer Counselors.</i>	VII. Required Proposal Content – Staffing	14
51.	Can individuals with significant life experience, work experience dealing with crisis response, and Holding a peer certification receive a waiver to work as a call specialist in this project.	<i>As stated in the RFP: “The successful bidder will describe their efforts to ensure workforce diversity and inclusion in the recruiting, hiring, and retention of staff who are from the target population (Trained and Certified Peer Counselors) or have had experience working with this population.” Peers working on this project should be certified, but waivers may be granted if needed. Peers with waivers will be required to work toward certification.</i>	VII. Required Proposal Content - Staffing	14
52.	What level of access with the project have to data entered the Bamboo system- demographics, staff actions, client assessments, and any outcome of referrals? How is this data reported for evaluation, and identification of reduction of disparities?	<i>Data for this project will be collected and reported using the Bamboo platform. NJ DMHAS has identified populations at high-risk for mental health challenges and/or suicide, and those that have been historically underserved by mental health services in NJ. Lifeline centers are asked to gather as much demographic information as possible during the initial contact through the intake form. This information will be collected and analyzed regularly to determine whether health disparities are adequately addressed.</i>	IV. Contract Scope of Work	7-8
53.	Will current reporting be modified to reflect changes in this RFP (the reporting that includes SAMHSA’s KPIs)?	<i>All data requirements as outlined in this RFP will be made available on the Bamboo platform.</i>	IV. Contract Scope of Work	7-8
54.	Will we be able to access statewide data to compare our county performance?	<i>Through the Bamboo platform, centers will have access to their own data. Centers will also have access to data from Vibrant, the national administrator of the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. On a monthly basis, Vibrant provides 988 Lifeline centers with an individualized report</i>	IV. Contract Scope of Work	7-8

Q	Bidder Question	DHS Answer	Section	Pg.
		<i>of their center's performance activities (e.g. contacts offered/answered, average speed to answer, average talk time, etc.). Vibrant also distributes the monthly Broad State Metrics report which shows the activity of all 988 centers within the state including calls/texts/chats routed, received, and answered statewide. Any additional data or performance reports must be requested from Vibrant.</i>		
55.	How will QCMR reporting on Annex A for 988 be affected?	<i>The QCMR and Annex A for 988 Lifeline data (calls, chats and texts) will be revised to reflect new reporting requirements. Much of the required data will be the same; additional required data elements will be added.</i>	IV. Contract Scope of Work	7-8
56.	Please reconfirm the due date for this procurement by providing it in response to answers to questions.	<i>The anticipated timeline can be found in the RFP.</i>	I. Purpose and Intent	4
57.	What is the date by which you will answer these questions?	<i>The anticipated timeline can be found in the RFP.</i>	I. Purpose and Intent	4
58.	Why has this bid been released at this time? If there was a previous solicitation for these services, what was its title, number, release date, and due date?	<i>NJ State Fiscal Year funds included \$10 million for the expansion of the 988 Lifeline network.</i> <i>Details regarding previous funding opportunities can be found at Department of Human Services Funding Opportunities (nj.gov)</i>	I. Purpose and Intent	4
59.	Is there a required number of years of experience or references?	<i>There is no specific requirement however, bidders must demonstrate their ability to provide 988 services through their background and experience.</i>	VII. Required Proposal Content	10
60.	Can you please provide greater explanation of your expectations related to any required subcontracting to minority-owned, women-owned, or other types or categories of small or disadvantaged businesses? For example, what is required with the proposal,	<i>All contract requirements are provided in the Contract Scope of Work.</i>	IV. Contract Scope of Work	7

Q	Bidder Question	DHS Answer	Section	Pg.
	and what is required to comply during the term of the contract?			
61.	Are bidders permitted to deviate in any way from any manner of quoting fees you may be expecting? For example, if there is a pricing page in the RFP, can bidders submit an alternate fee structure? If there is no pricing page in the RFP, do you have any preference for how bidders should quote fees or can bidders create their own pricing categories?	<i>Bidders are required to complete and submit the DMHAS Excel budget template as part of their proposal.</i> <i>There is no pricing page, as bidders are expected to provide sufficient detail using the proposed budget template.</i>	VII. Required Proposal Content	10
62.	Please describe your level of satisfaction with your current or recent vendor(s) for the same purchasing activity, if applicable.	<i>It would not be appropriate to comment on current vendors in this context.</i>	NA	
63.	Has the current contract gone full term?	<i>Details regarding previous funding opportunities, including contract terms, can be found at Department of Human Services Funding Opportunities (nj.gov)</i>	NA	
64.	Have all options to extend the current contract been exercised?	<i>Details regarding previous funding opportunities, including contract terms, can be found at Department of Human Services Funding Opportunities (nj.gov)</i>	NA	
65.	Who is the incumbent, and how long has the incumbent been providing the requested services?	<i>NJ currently has 5 centers that provided services for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (NSPL) for many years and have continued their commitment to providing these services through the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline system. Previous funding opportunities were for existing 988 Lifeline centers. Information about previous awards can be found at Department of Human Services RFP/NOFA Award Summaries (nj.gov)</i>	NA	

Q	Bidder Question	DHS Answer	Section	Pg.
66.	To what extent will the location of the bidder's proposed location or headquarters have a bearing on any award?	<i>As stated in the RFP, contacts to 988 are routed via the individual's county, area-code or zip code. Bidders must select county(ies) for which they will provide primary coverage and, if desired county(ies) for backup coverage.</i>	II. Background and Population to be Served VII. Required Proposal Content - Bidder's Organization, History and Experience	4-5 10-11
67.	How are fees currently being billed by any incumbent(s), by category, and at what rates?	<i>There are no fees collected for this program. It is a cost-based program funded by DMHAS</i>	NA	
68.	What estimated or actual dollars were paid last year, last month, or last quarter to any incumbent(s)?	<i>Information about previous awards can be found at Department of Human Services RFP/NOFA Award Summaries (nj.gov) These funding opportunities were only available to existing 988 Lifeline centers. <i>In addition, DMHAS provided \$1.7 million to the NJ Hopeline, a suicide prevention call line that operates 24/7/365.</i></i>	NA	
69.	Is previous experience with any specific customer information systems, phone systems, or software required?	<i>There are no specific requirements in this area. Bidders must detail their agency's background and experience to demonstrate their ability to provide these services. However, as stated in the RFP, agencies awarded funding for calls, chats, and texts will be required to utilize the Crisis and Open Beds Modules of the data management platform developed by Bamboo Health.</i>	IV. Contract Scope of Work	8
70.	What is the minimum required total call capacity?	<i>There is no minimum requirement.</i>	NA	
71.	What is the minimum simultaneous inbound call capacity?	<i>There is no minimum requirement.</i>	NA	
72.	What percentage of inbound calls must be answered by a live operator?	<i>As stated in the RFP, "The goal of this funding is to enable NJ Lifeline centers to respond to at least 90% of calls... routed to their center through the 988 Lifeline network."</i>	I. Purpose and Intent	3

Q	Bidder Question	DHS Answer	Section	Pg.
73.	Is there a minimum or maximum number of operators and supervisors?	<i>As stated in the RFP, "Bidders must determine staffing structure to satisfy the contract requirements."</i>	VII. Required Proposal Content	14
74.	What are the required language options?	<i>As stated in the RFP, successful bidders will "ensure services meet the language access needs of individuals served by this project."</i>	IV. Contract Scope of Work	7
75.	What is the required degree of dedication for the call center? (Can call centers work on other contracts at the same time as this one)?	<p><i>As stated in the RFP, bidders must identify their proposed hours of operation. The goal of this funding is to enable NJ Lifeline centers to respond to at least 90% of calls and/or chats/texts routed to their center through the 988 Lifeline network.</i></p> <p><i>Centers may hold other contracts, but the expectation of this RFP is to respond to 90% of 988 contacts routed to the center. However, funds from this procurement may only be used for the purposes as outlined in the RFP.</i></p>	VII. Required Proposal Content	13
76.	What is the required degree of dedication for the operators? (Can operators work on other contracts at the same time as this one)?	<p><i>As stated in the RFP, bidders must identify the number of work hours per week for each full time and part time equivalent. The goal of this funding is to enable NJ Lifeline centers to respond to at least 90% of calls and/or chats/texts routed to their center through the 988 Lifeline network.</i></p> <p><i>Funds from this procurement may only be used for the purposes of operating the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline system in their center. The expectation of this RFP is to respond to 90% of 988 contacts routed to the center.</i></p>	VII. Required Proposal Content	13
77.	Are callers required or allowed to connect with a message verification system or pre-recorded message before connecting to a live operator, or must a live operator be the initial contact?	<p><i>Upon dialing 988, callers hear an automated message from Vibrant, the 988 Lifeline network provider.</i></p> <p><i>Please refer to Vibrant's 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline Minimum Standards for Crisis Contact Centers Applying to Join the 988 Lifeline Network (link below) for additional information on Quality Assurance.</i></p> <p><u>Microsoft Word - 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline Minimum Standards for crisis contact centers applying to join the 988</u></p>	I. Purpose and Intent	3

Q	Bidder Question	DHS Answer	Section	Pg.
		network [January 2022].docx (988lifeline.org)		
78.	What are the recording requirements for inbound and outbound phone calls and how long must recordings be maintained?	<i>Information about privacy, call routing, and network functioning, including call recordings, can be found at 988 Frequently Asked Questions SAMHSA</i>	NA	
79.	What are the recording and storage requirements for non-phone communications?	<i>Information about privacy, call routing, and network functioning can be found at 988 Frequently Asked Questions SAMHSA</i>	NA	
80.	What information is to be included in call logs?	<i>Data requirements can be found in the RFP under the Contract Scope of Work.</i>	IV. Contract Scope of Work	8
81.	What is the current number of seats for operators and supervisors at your existing call center?	<i>NJ currently has 5 Lifeline centers with varying staffing structures based upon a variety of factors including coverage assignments and incoming call volume.</i>	NA	
82.	What is the current average handle time for phone calls and other types of communications?	<i>Average national contact times can be found at 988 Lifeline Performance Metrics SAMHSA. Average state contact times can be found at 988-In-State-KPI-Report 2024-03-01 to 2024-03-31.pdf (988lifeline.org)</i>	NA	
83.	What is the current average after-call work time for operators?	<i>This data point is not reported at the national or state level.</i>	NA	
84.	Over the past year, what is the percentage of calls received in English versus non-English?	<i>In NJ, the percentage of non-English calls is less than 1% because there is an option at the beginning of the call to select Spanish as a preferred language, and calls are routed to a national call center with this language capacity.</i>	IV. Contract Scope of Work VII. Required Proposal Content – Project Description	8 13
85.	Over the past year, what percentage of calls received were in Spanish?	<i>Percentage of calls received in Spanish can be found at 988 Lifeline Performance Metrics SAMHSA</i>	NA	
86.	What time of day, days of the week, or times of the year do calls typically peak?	<i>Call volumes vary greatly. However, busiest times are on weekdays between 10:00 AM and midnight (12:00 AM). Weekends during the same hours are also fairly busy.</i>	I. Purpose and Intent VII. Required Proposal Content – Staffing	3 14-15