The responses to questions included herein are the official responses by the State to questions submitted by potential applicants and are hereby incorporated into RFA # 21-ONA-19 issued on September 20, 2021. In the event of any conflict between the RFA and these responses, the requirements or information contained in these responses will prevail.

Section V. Additional Requirements, Staffing is hereby amended to read:

The Contractor must have enough staff to answer calls during operating hours so that clients may have their calls answered in a timely fashion. The grantee must track average call waiting time to ensure that clients do not wait excessive amounts of time. Based on past historical service levels, the Hotline caller wait times have averaged under one minute. The average Hotline caller wait time should not exceed 5 minutes.

Q1. Can companies from Outside USA apply for this? (like from India or Canada)

A1. No, per Section III, Applicant Eligibility only not-for-profit organizations located within New York State are eligible for funding under this RFA.

Q2. Do we need to come over there for meetings?

A2. There are no requirements for attending meetings in person.

Q3. Can we perform the tasks (related to RFP) outside USA? (like, from India or Canada)

A3. No, applicants must be located within New York State.

Q4. Can we submit the proposals via email?

A4. Yes. Please see Section VIII. Application Submission for instructions on how to submit applications electronically.

Q5. Please reconfirm the due date for this procurement by providing it in response to answers to questions.

A5. The due date for proposals is October 29, 2021

Q6. Why has this bid been released at this time?
A6. The current contract is ending on 11/30/2021.

Q7. 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?

A7. No, as stated in Section VIII. Application Submission, the applicant’s cost proposal must contain the completed Cost Proposal form found in Appendix B. Applicants who do not use the Cost Proposal form provided may be found non-responsive.

Q8. Please describe your level of satisfaction with your current or recent vendor(s) for the same purchasing activity, if applicable.

A8. Information regarding current vendor performance and organization is not relevant to the current solicitation.

Q9. If this is a term contract subject to renewal, what is the term and the maximum number of option periods?

A9. Per Section II, Funding and Project Period the contract will have a five-year term. Funding is contingent upon funds being appropriated in the State budget and the organization’s ability to meet the program requirements in each year of the contract as stipulated in this RFA.

Q10. Has the current contract gone full term?

A10. Yes

Q11. Have all options to extend the current contract been exercised?

A11. Yes

Q12. Who is the incumbent, and how long has the incumbent been providing the requested services?

A12. Information regarding current vendor performance and organization can be obtained through a FOIL request.

Q13. How are fees currently being billed by any incumbent(s), by category, and at what rates?

A13. Information regarding current vendor performance and organization can be obtained through a FOIL request.
Q14. What estimated or actual dollars were paid last year, last month, or last quarter to any incumbent(s)?

A14. Information regarding current vendor performance and organization can be obtained through a FOIL request.

Q15. What is the minimum required total call capacity?

A15. There is no minimum required call capacity. Based on past call volume, vendors should be prepared to answer an average of 25,000 total calls annually.

Q16. What is the minimum simultaneous inbound call capacity?

A16. ONA does not have requirements around simultaneous inbound call capacity.

Q17. What is the maximum wait time?

A17. Per Section V Additional Requirements, the Contractor must have enough staff to answer calls during operating hours so that clients may have their calls answered in a timely fashion. The grantee must track average call waiting time to ensure that clients do not wait excessive amounts of time. Based on past historical service levels, the Hotline caller wait times have averaged under one minute. The average Hotline caller wait time should not exceed 5 minutes.

Q18. What is the maximum hold time?

A18. The average Hotline caller wait time should not exceed 5 minutes.

Q19. What percentage of inbound calls must be answered by a live operator?

A19. ONA does not have requirements around this. The average Hotline caller wait time should not exceed 5 minutes.

Q20. What percentage of calls must be resolved without a transfer, second call, or a return call?

A20. ONA does not have requirements around this. Callers should receive a return call within 1 business day or less. Referrals are anticipated as part of the scope of work.

Q21. What is the maximum percentage of calls that can be terminated by the caller without resolution?
A21: ONA does not have requirements around this. However, as stated in Section IV. Scope of Services, Hotline staff will refer clients, depending on need, to free or low-cost resources within the community, including ONA grantees. It is anticipated that not all inquiries will be resolved through this hotline.

Q22. Is there a minimum or maximum number of operators and supervisors?

A22. As stated in Section V Additional Requirements, the Contractor must have enough staff to answer calls during operating hours so that clients may have their calls answered in a timely fashion. The grantee must track average call waiting time to ensure that clients do not wait excessive amounts of time. Based on past historical service levels, the Hotline caller wait times have averaged under one minute. The average Hotline caller wait time should not exceed 5 minutes.

Q23. What are the required language options?

A23. Per Section IV, Scope of Service, the Contractor must have the capacity to conduct phone conversations in the language of the caller’s choice, either through staff fluent in the language or through use of a language line.

Q24. What is the required degree of dedication for the call center?

A24. Per Section V Additional Requirements, The Contractor must have enough staff to answer calls during operating hours so that clients may have their calls answered in a timely fashion. Callers should receive a return call within 1 business day or less. The grantee must track average call waiting time to ensure that clients do not wait excessive amounts of time or on average 5 minutes. Based on past historical service levels, the Hotline caller wait times have averaged under one minute.

The call center should have the capacity to answer 25,000 calls annually.

Q25. What is the required degree of dedication for the operators?

A25. Per Section V Additional Requirements, The Contractor must have enough staff to answer calls during operating hours so that clients may have their calls answered in a timely fashion. Callers should receive a return call within 1 business day or less. The grantee must track average call waiting time to ensure that clients do not wait excessive amounts of time or on average 5 minutes. Based on past historical service levels, the Hotline caller wait times have averaged under one minute.

Q26. 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?

A26. Callers are allowed to, but not required to, connect with a pre-recorded message before connecting to a live operator.
Q27. What are the recording requirements for inbound and outbound phone calls and how long must recordings be maintained?

A27. ONA does not have requirements around this.

Q28. What are the recording and storage requirements for non-phone communications?

A28. Records must be maintained in accordance with the Master Grants Contract, Section IV. E. 1. b.

Q29. What information is to be included in call logs?

A29. Contractor should track overall number of calls, languages of calls, types of calls received, area from which the call originated. For Complaints Relating to Fraud and Other Related Crimes Against New Americans: the log should include the client’s name, date of call, contact information, and brief summary of complaint.

Q30. What is the current number of seats for operators and supervisors at your existing call center?

A30. That information is not available at this time.

Q31. What is the current average handle time for phone calls and other types of communications?

A31. That information is not available at this time.

Q32. What is the current average after-call work time for operators?

A32. That information is not available at this time.

Q33. What time of day, days of the week, or times of the year do calls typically peak?

A33. Increases in calls typically occur after immigration policy announcements or changes.

Q34. In the second paragraph of the Introduction then again in Scope of Services you reference “one qualified organization”. Our organization subcontracts with regional contact centers. We are a system, not one organization. Are we eligible under the RFA to apply to be the grantee?

A34. Section III, Applicant Eligibility, says “Not-for-profit organizations located within New York State are eligible for funding under this RFA.” If your organization is a not-for-profit organization that meets the Eligibility requirements, you may apply under this RFA. Please note, as stated in Section II of the RFA, subcontracting is not allowed under this grant.
Q35. Are 25,000 calls and 50,000 referrals a performance target that must be met?

A35. Contractors must respond to all calls received in a timely fashion as detailed in Section V Additional Requirements. Based on past call volume, an average of 25,000 total calls and 50,000 referrals are anticipated annually. The contractor should be prepared to handle this volume every year, but it is not a performance target that needs to be met. The contract will initially be structured to pay for 25,000 calls/year and 50,000 referrals/year, however, if the contractor anticipates receiving more than 25,000 calls or 50,000 referrals each year, DOS will work with the contractor to amend the contract for additional funds.