



REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL:
2023-100
After Hours Answering Service

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1.0 Introduction

Huron Perth Public Health serves the residents and visitors of Huron and Perth Counties. The Health Unit offers a wide range of public health services aimed to promote and protect health and prevent disease, illness, and injury.

The Health Unit serves a population of 97,363 across a geographic area of approximately 5,575 square kilometers. Health Unit programs and services are delivered from four offices across Huron and Perth Counties (Clinton, Wingham, Stratford, and Listowel). As a public health unit located in Ontario, HPPH is required to ensure 24-7 response to urgent public health issues and associated emergencies.

2.0 Purpose

Huron Perth Public Health (“HPPH”) is seeking qualified service providers (hereby referred to as “successful bidder”) to submit proposals to provide afterhours answering services to HPPH. HPPH is seeking a **5 Year Service Agreement**, with an opportunity for renewal to provide the services of a company who specializes in:

- After-hours customer service support
- Call triaging and referral
- Weekly and monthly call log report generation

All qualified service providers are invited to respond to this Request for Proposals (“RFP”) by submitting a proposal consistent with the terms, conditions, and specifications stated herein.

3.0 Background

HPPH’s is required under the Ontario Public Health Standards to ensure 24-7 response to urgent public health issues and associated emergencies. Providing excellent public health services is a twenty-four (24) hour, seven (7) day a week, three hundred sixty-five (365) day a year requirement. HPPH’s regular operational working hours

are from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. HPPH receives calls from the public, local businesses, municipalities, service providers, drinking water operators, laboratories, health care facilities and health care professionals. Calls during regular operational hours are handled by public health staff.

HPPH requires after hours answering services from 4:00 p.m. to 8:30 a.m. Monday through Friday and twenty-four (24) hour answering service on weekends and statutory holidays. Operationally, two (2) HPPH staff are assigned afterhours coverage along with the Medical Officer of Health and/or Physician Consultant. Staff are scheduled Tuesday-Tuesday on a weekly basis. All schedules will be provided monthly to the successful bidder one week prior to the start of each month.

HPPH may require call handling during business hours in the event of unexpected office closures and/or power outages. HPPH will provide the successful bidder with written notice as soon as possible in advance of such issues.

HPPH does not require overflow call handling during normal business hours.

The location of the call center must be in the Province of Ontario.

HPPH intends for this RFP to result in a contract with a successful bidder to provide calls of an urgent

public health nature outside regular operational hours and on weekends and statutory holidays in accordance with the terms, conditions, and specifications of this RFP and resulting contract.

For additional information, please see our website at www.hpph.ca.

4.0 Proposal Submission and Closing Time

Three original copies of the proposal must be sent electronically to rfp@hpph.ca. Note: This is a locked, secured email with no ability to respond.

Proposals must be received on or before the following date and time (the “Closing Time”):

Time: 4:30pm local time

Date: November 17, 2023

Submissions by fax will not be accepted. Proposals received after the Closing Time will not be accepted or considered.

4.1 Proposal Instructions

- Proposals are to be submitted electronically via the email noted above, clearly identifying on the submission with the bidder’s name and return address, along with the appropriate submission title: Afterhours Answering Service RFP# 2023-100
- A Proposal may be withdrawn at the office indicated in *4.0 Proposal Submission and Closing Time* at any time prior to the Proposal Closing Time by a request in writing signed by the bidder.
- A bidder who has withdrawn a Proposal may submit a new Proposal, but only in accordance with the terms of this RFP.
- A Proposal may not be withdrawn at or after the proposal closing time and shall remain valid and be open for acceptance by HPPH, in whole or in part.

4.2 Proposal Schedule

Activities	Anticipated Completion Date
Proposal Closing Time	November 17, 2023, 4:30pm
HPPH review of Proposals	Week of November 20, 2023
Selection and notification of successful bidder by HPPH	Immediately following review

4.3 Proposal Steps

STEP 1 – COMPLETE COVER LETTER

Your cover letter should contain the contact information for the person primarily responsible for your proposal and key personnel including experience/training and licenses held.

STEP 2 – OUTLINE YOUR METHOD OF FULFILLING THE SPECIFICATIONS OF WORK REQUIRED

Your proposal narrative has no restrictions on length; however, it should contain sufficient detail addressing each aspect of the required specifications. Feel free to include any reports from previous projects.

STEP 3 – PROJECT COSTS

Please provide a fixed price quote for the completion of each of the following components:

- Costs associated with dispatching after hours calls to HPPH afterhours staff
 - Annual cost breakdown
- Informatics associated with type and number of calls forwarded to HPPH afterhours staff
 - Weekly call log by type of call
 - Monthly summaries

These prices shall include any additional charges required to carry out the work as outlined in this document.

Bidders shall ensure they examine their proposals and immediately report to the individual specified in

4.0 Proposal Submission and Closing Time, all errors, omissions, or ambiguities in the RFP documents.

4.4 Proposal Inquiries

All inquiries related to this RFP should be directed in writing via email, to Public Health Manager, Lori Holmes (lholfmes@hpph.ca). Such inquiries should be requested no later than 5 days before Closing Time. The Health Unit reserves the right not to respond to inquiries made within 5 days of the Closing Time. Inquiries and responses will be documented and may be distributed to all Proponents at the discretion of the Health Unit.

Proponents finding discrepancies or omissions in the RFP or having doubts as to the meaning or intent of any provision, should immediately notify Lori Holmes, Public Health Manager via email.

5.0 Scope of Services Required

After hours answering services are required for the following program areas within the HPPH OnCall Program: Environmental Health and Infectious Disease/IPAC/Clinical. The successful bidder shall provide answering services for both urgent and emergency calls as associated with two call streams identified defined below:

Call Type by On-Call Stream

Environmental Health

- Safe Water: Adverse water report from laboratory or water works owners/operators (includes SDWS operators)
- By-passes (untreated/treated sewage)
- Air Quality Concerns
- Rabies: Animal bites/exposures, bat encounters/queries (includes risk assessments associated with recommendation to administer post-exposure prophylaxis)
- Novel Animal Illnesses (e.g., canine influenza)
- Chemical Exposure including Spills/Decontamination Consultations and Inquiries
- Evacuation Shelter Inquires
- Fire in a Food or Health Care establishments
- Food Premise Complaints
- Food Recalls/Tampering
- General health hazards (environmental issues or complaints)
- Severe weather (Extreme Heat/Cold, tornadoes)

- Notifications from police, ambulance/paramedics, fire, Municipalities/County (e.g., chemical releases, sewage spills, floods, power outages, emergencies)
- Power Outage Notifications
- Rabies vaccine release/inquires.
- Suspect Food Poisoning
- Suspicious Packages/Substance (chemical/unknown agent)
- Urgent vector-borne disease exposures (including Tick exposures/submissions)

Infectious Disease/IPAC/Clinical

- Community illness/disease risks (e.g., Meningitis, E. coli, group A strep, COVID, influenza)
- Reportable diseases (e.g., Any healthcare provider or laboratory reporting or seeking consultation on reportable diseases)
- Contact of a case that the ID Intake has notified to call
- IPAC Lapses
- Emergency situations under police investigations with public health impact e.g., biological agent releases such as suspect anthrax or smallpox.
- Outbreaks/Suspect outbreaks
- related to institutions (e.g., long-term care, retirement homes, congregate living, hospitals)
 - Enteric (vomiting and diarrhea)
 - Respiratory (fever, cough, runny nose, etc.)
- Ministry of Health report re: unusual illness or outbreaks from a provincial perspective
- Blood and bodily fluid exposures related to Harm Reduction (e.g., Needle stick injuries)
- Blood borne Exposures: Mandatory Blood Testing Act response
- Sharps found in a public space (e.g., needles)
- Other health units reporting outbreaks with contacts in local health unit
- Vaccine Fridge Response: Vaccine Fridge Failure Inquires from health care providers, temperature control notifications from Bull Dog (NOTE: HPPH process re: out of range temperature reports anticipated Spring 2021, current Huron and Perth processes remain in effect)
- Vaccine Requests other than Rabies (i.e., Hepatitis B/Tetanus)
- Adverse Effects Following Immunization (e.g., COVID vaccine – urgent related calls)

Non-emergency or calls falling outside the above topic areas would be referred to HPPH during regular business hours.

HPPH reserves the right to amend call type lists above at anytime. HPPH will provide the successful bidder written notice as soon as possible when changes are made.

5.1 Call Referral

The quality, reliability and timeliness of call referral is integral to HPPH's response to after hours to urgent public health issues and emergencies. HPPH will also require assurance that the successful bidder has sufficient capacity in terms of staff resources and staff qualifications to respond to calls to HPPH outside regular working hours. HPPH expects the successful candidate to demonstrate quick and timely referral and response as indicated in section 5.2 below.

5.2 Service Expectations

1. Daily Support

- The successful bidder shall provide a dedicated account manager for day-to-day account support.
- The account manager shall be responsive to emails and phone communications.
- A supervisor and or delegate shall be available on-call 24/7/365 to respond to requests during emergency events with the authority to make changes to the HPPH’s account as needed.
- There shall be no scenario where HPPH cannot reach account support and a supervisor/manager.

2. The successful bidder shall provide the following level of service for all calls:

- Provide toll free number for callers to access the successful bidder afterhours that will be referred to as “Huron Perth Public Health Answering Service.”
- Answer as “Huron Perth Public Health Answering Service”.
- Be courteous and professional.
- All calls shall be answered by a live operator. In addition, such calls should be recorded for quality assurance purposes (e.g., to support referral in the event there is an issue with transcription of a call to HPPH staff)
- Calls shall not be placed on hold for more than one (1) minute.
- Live operators will refer calls to HPPH staff by text message.

3. For urgent public health issues/concerns/emergencies (as defined above), the successful bidder shall provide the following level of service:

- Obtain and record a description of the issue/concern.
- Record the caller’s name, location (e.g., Hospital, business name, general public) and phone number (a phone number is important so HPPH can call the caller back).
- Dispatch the call to the appropriate HPPH staff per schedule provided by HPPH within five (5) minutes.
- Where staff do not respond within fifteen (15) minutes, an escalation algorithm as provided by HPPH, will be used until the call is acknowledged by HPPH staff.

4. Audio Recordings

The successful bidder shall have the ability to record phone calls for the purpose of quality assurance and maintain recordings for 30 days in the event HPPH requires review of a call. Recordings should be date and time stamped. This will also support issues where transcription of calls to texts are not accurate and HPPH staff must call to confirm names/phone numbers of callers.

5. Non-emergency type requests, the successful bidder shall provide the following level of service:

- Inform the caller that they may call HPPH at 1-888-221-2133 during regular business hours from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm. Monday through Friday.

5.3 Expected Deliverables

The successful bidder will be responsible for the following:

1. Weekly Reporting

- The successful bidder shall provide to HPPH, on a weekly basis the following call-related data pertaining to calls received, sorted by the group type (as defined in Section 5 - Environmental Health or Infectious Disease/IPAC/Clinical).
 - Name, phone number, and location
 - Reason for call (HPPH will provide listing of reasons)
 - Time the call was received by successful bidder
 - Time is to be formatted as DD-MM-YYYY-HRMIN – example Nov.15, 2023 9:12 AM

expressed as 15-NOV-2023 09:12

- Time text sent to HPPH on call staff
- Time of text confirmation received by successful bidder from HPPH on call staff
- Time and mode of each attempt to contact HPPH on call staff
- When necessary, time of attempt to contact additional HPPH staff per escalation algorithm, time of contact and name

6.0 Cost Coverage

The costs provided in the proposal must be for all the above as well as for all labour, staff time, goods, materials, products, supplies, and equipment necessary for the performance of the services.

7.0 Provision of Services

- The successful bidder will carry out the services as set out in this Request for Proposal. The timing of the services shall be in accordance with any Provincial or Federal guidelines or legislation, as indicated within this Proposal and/or as directed by HPPH.
- Once any agreement is signed, between HPPH and the successful bidder, it may be amended at any time in writing with the agreement of both parties to provide for additional services and payment.
- Upon the HPPH's request, the successful bidder shall provide any information or documents regarding the successful bidder's performance of the Services and this Agreement. In addition, HPPH shall be permitted to attend at any reasonable time to monitor the successful bidder's performance of the Services.
- The successful bidder understands that, from time-to-time, they may be requested to answer questions from HPPH staff. It is also understood by both the HPPH and the successful bidder that communication must sometimes occur outside of regular business hours to facilitate the time-sensitive nature of issues dealing with urgent public health issues or emergencies.

8.0 Warranties

The successful bidder hereby represents and warrants to and covenants with HPPH as follows:

- The successful bidder has full power and authority to enter into this Agreement and to observe, perform and comply with the terms and conditions of this Agreement, and all necessary acts and procedures have been taken to authorize this Agreement;
- The successful bidder shall comply with the standards of care, skill and diligence normally provided in the performance of services like those contemplated herein;
- The successful bidder holds, or will hold, all permits, licenses, consents, intellectual property rights, registrations, and authorities necessary to perform its obligations under this Agreement and the successful bidder shall comply with the terms and conditions of all such permits, licenses, consents, intellectual property rights, registrations and authorities;
- The successful bidder shall comply with all applicable federal, provincial, and municipal laws, rules, orders, regulations, and by-laws in respect of the performance of this Agreement;
- The successful bidder shall not, in the performance of this Agreement, infringe or violate any patent, copyright, trade secret, trademark, industrial design, intellectual property right, or any other right of any person or entity; and
- The successful bidder is a corporation and is duly organized, registered, and validly existing under the laws of Ontario or Canada, and is qualified to do business wherever necessary to carry out the terms of this Agreement, and has not been dissolved or wound up.

Insurance Requirements

Before beginning work, the successful bidder must furnish a Certificate of Insurance confirming Commercial General Liability Insurance of \$2,000,000 and Professional Liability Insurance of \$2,000,000.

- The successful bidder shall be required to enter an agreement which will hold harmless HPPH and affected municipal entities from all costs of any kind attributable to anything done or omitted to be done by the bidder or its personnel in connection with this work.
- The above insurance shall be provided by the insurer(s) licensed in Ontario and/or acceptable to Huron Perth Public Health.

10.0 General Provisions

- The lowest or any tender need not necessarily be accepted.
- Any reports, and records generated by successful bidder under this program become the property of the HPPH.
- Bidders shall submit the names of at least three references, preferably other Health Units and provide permission for us to contact them.
- Where a bidder has a standard contract form used for this kind of work, we require that it be submitted as part of the tender process.
- HPPH reserves the right to change program deliverables without impacting the price quoted in response to this tender.

11.0 Funding

The award of any contract shall be conditional upon funding availability as dictated by the Health Unit budget and approval by the Board of Health for Huron Perth Public Health.

12.0 No Binding Contract

The Health Unit reserves the right to refuse the assignment of the work/service to another company/supplier. The Health Unit may, after reviewing the Proposal received, enter into discussions with one or more of the Proponents, without such discussion in any way creating a Binding Contract on behalf of the Health Unit.

This RFP should not create a legal binding agreement on behalf of the Health Unit. By submitting a Proposal and participating in the process as outlined in this RFP, bidders expressly agree that no Contract of any kind is formed under, or arises from the RFP, prior to the signing of a formal written Contract.

13.0 Contract Award

All inquiries related to the status of this RFP, including whether a Contract has been awarded, should be directed to Lori Holmes, Public Health Manager (lholfmes@hpph.ca).

If the Health Unit selects a Preferred Proponent(s), then it may:

- a) Enter into a Contract with the Preferred Proponent(s); or
- b) Enter into discussions with the Preferred Proponent(s) to clarify any outstanding issues and attempt to finalize the terms of the Contract, including financial terms. If discussions are successful, the Health Unit and the Preferred Proponent(s) will finalize the Contract; or

- c) If at any time the Health Unit reasonably forms the opinion that a mutually acceptable agreement is not likely to be reached within a reasonable time, give the preferred bidder(s) written notice to terminate discussions, in which event the Health Unit may then either open discussions with another Proponent or terminate this RFP and retain or obtain the Services in some other manner.

14.0 Method of Payment

- All pricing shall be in Canadian funds; all applicable taxes shall be shown as extra.
- Payment for work rendered shall be made progressively upon presentation of detailed invoices for approval. Invoices shall be forwarded monthly to purchasing@hpph.ca.