

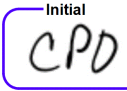


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Craig P. Orgeron, CPM, Ph.D., Executive Director

RFP Questions and Clarifications Memorandum

To: Vendors Responding to RFP Number 4689 for the Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH)

From: Craig P. Orgeron, CPM, Ph.D. 

Date: July 17, 2026

Subject: Responses to Questions Submitted and Clarifications to Specifications

Contact Name: Brittany Porter

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RFP Number 4689 is hereby amended as follows:

1. **RFP, Exhibit A. Standard Contract, Article 3.2F shall be and hereby is modified to read:**
 - f) Maintaining the accessibility of the site twenty-four (24) hours a day, seven (7) days a week at an uptime rate of ~~99.98%~~ 99% or greater, subject to the limitations set forth in this Agreement, including but not limited to, those in Article 4.4;
2. **RFP, Exhibit A. Standard Contract, Article 40.3 shall be and hereby is modified to read :**
 - 40.3 Severity Level 1 implies that the Application system is down (unscheduled downtime) or is practically down. Some examples of Severity Level 1 problems are as follows: (a) The Application has an extremely slow response time; and/ or (b) The Application does not function at all, as determined by the State (c) There is no way to circumvent the problem; (d) A significant number of State users, including distributors and recipient agencies, are affected; (e) A production business system is inoperable. Licensor shall resolve Severity Level 1 Errors within ~~eight (8)~~ twelve (12) consecutive hours from intake, with a response time of ~~one (1) – two (2) hours~~ one (1) – two (2) hours from intake.
3. **RFP, Exhibit A. Standard Contract, Article 40.4 shall be and hereby is modified to read:**
 - 40.4 Severity Level 2 implies that the Application is not performing in accordance with the specifications. Some examples of Severity Level 2 problems are as follows: (a)

Slow response time, creating significant State business impact; (b) It's core functionality is not available, or one of the system requirements is not met, as determined by the state. Licensor shall resolve Severity Level 2 Errors within ~~ten (10) twenty-four (24)~~ consecutive hours from intake, with a response time of ~~one (1) hour two (2) -three (3) hours~~ from intake.

4. RFP, Exhibit A. Standard Contract, Article 40.5 shall be and hereby is modified to read:

40.5 Severity Level 3 implies that the Application is not performing in accordance with the specifications. Some examples of Severity Level 3 problems are as follows: (a) Unexpected results; (b) Moderate or minor operational impact, as determined by the State. Licensor shall resolve Severity Level 3 within ~~seven (7) days~~ forty (40) hours from intake, with a response time of ~~one (1) hour~~ four (4) hours from intake.

5. RFP, Exhibit A. Standard Contract, Article 40.6 shall be and hereby is modified to read:

40.6 Severity Level 4 implies that the Application is a low impact problem, that is not significant to operations or is related to education as determined by the State. Some examples of Severity Level 4 problems are as follows: (a) General how to or informational solution software questions; (b) Understanding of reports; (c) General how to create reports, and/or documentation requests. Licensor shall resolve Severity Level 4 ~~by the next version release, or within a mutually agreed upon time frame by the State and Licensor~~ within Eighty (80) hours from intake. The response time should be within ~~one (1) hour~~ four (4) hours from intake.

6. Attachment A, Section II. Functional/Technical Requirements, A. System Requirements/Capabilities, Item 25.a is being added as follows:

25.a At go-live, the State anticipates requiring five (5) newly provisioned telephone numbers.

7. Attachment A, Section II. Functional/Technical Requirements, A. System Requirements/Capabilities, Item 37 shall be and hereby modified to read:

37. **MANDATORY:** The solution must ~~be capable of~~ have the capacity to support sending and receiving ~~minimum of~~ at least 30,200 outbound messages per month and 14,000 inbound SMS messages, phone calls, or emails per month.

8. Attachment A, Section III. Support and Maintenance, C. Service Level Agreements, Item 82. - Table 1- Service Level Agreement is being modified as follows:

82. For the initial term and any extended terms of service, the Vendor must agree that, except as the result of a catastrophic event, Vendor will provide least ~~99.98%~~ 99% percent availability of all MSDH registration system services, to be measured monthly.

Table 1 – Service Level Agreement

Priority Severity Level	Description of Deficiency	Response Required	Resolution Time
1 Critical	System is down (unscheduled downtime) or is practically down (e.g., extremely slow response time) or does not function at all, as determined by State. There is no way to circumvent the problem; a significant number of State users, including distributors and recipient agencies, are affected. A production business system is inoperable.	Within one hour from intake <u>Within 1-2 hours</u>	Eight-Twelve consecutive hours from intake
2 Severe	A component of the solution is not performing in accordance with the specifications (e.g., slow response time), creating significant State business impact, its core functionality is not available, or one of system requirements is not met, as determined by State.	Within one hour from intake <u>Within 2-3 hours</u>	Ten-Twenty-four consecutive hours from intake
3 Moderate	A component of the solution is not performing in accordance with the specifications; there are unexpected results, moderate or minor operational impact, as determined by State.	Within one hour from intake <u>Within 4 hours</u>	Seven days from intake <u>Forty hours from intake</u>
4 Low	As determined by the State, this is a low impact problem that is not significant to operations or is related to education. Some examples are general <i>how to</i> or informational solution software questions, understanding of reports, general <i>how to create reports</i> , or documentation requests.	Within one hour from intake <u>Within 4 hours</u>	Low impact software or operational issues to be resolved by next version release unless otherwise agreed to by State and Vendor. Eighty hours from intake.

9. **Section VIII: Cost Information Submission shall be and hereby is deleted and replaced with the attached Revised Cost Information Submission. All references in the RFP to “Section VIII: Cost Information Submission” shall now mean “Revised Cost Information Submission”.**

Vendor must include in their proposal a response to each amended requirement listed above. Vendor must respond using the same terminology as provided in the original requirements.

The following questions were submitted to ITS and are being presented as they were submitted, except to remove any reference to a specific vendor. This information should assist you in formulating your response.

Question 1: Attachment A, Section I. General, B. General Overview and Background: Is MSDH currently using an incumbent WIC messaging vendor or internal system for these services? If yes, does this RFP add new features beyond what you're currently using and if so, what are the features?

Response: **Yes, MSDH is currently using an incumbent WIC messaging Vendor for these services. Yes, we are requesting new features as listed within the technical requirements of the RFP 4689 Attachment A document.**

Question 2: Attachment A, Section II. Functional/Technical Requirements, A. System Requirements/Capabilities, Items 18 and 32: For two-way texting, should participants be able to initiate new conversations at any time, or only respond to messages initiated by WIC staff or automated campaigns?

Response: **For two-way text messaging, the WIC Participants should only be able to have conversational messaging once a message is initiated by WIC staff or automated campaigns.**

Question 3: Attachment A, Section II. Functional/Technical Requirements, A. System Requirements/Capabilities, Item 21: Must the system natively send pre-translated messages in Spanish, or is it acceptable for the vendor to provide translation tools that allow MSDH staff to manage translation?

Response: **The system must provide text and email messages in English or Spanish based on the participants' preference. It is not acceptable for the Vendor to provide translation tools that allow MSDH staff to manage translations.**

Question 4: Attachment A, Section II. Functional/Technical Requirements, A. System Requirements/Capabilities, Item 25: The RFP requires messages to originate from current, local, and recognizable phone numbers that support sender identification. Does this requirement mandate Mississippi area code 10DLC numbers, or would a dedicated short code or toll-free number satisfy this requirement?

Response: **This requirement mandates a Mississippi area code 10DLC (10-Digit Long Code, similar to cell phone numbers).**

Question 5: Attachment A, Section II. Functional/Technical Requirements, A. System Requirements/Capabilities, Item 25: For messages that must come from current, local, and recognizable phone numbers, how many phone numbers are expected at go-live, are those existing voice numbers, and should vendors

assume messaging through existing numbers, number porting, or newly provisioned numbers?

Response: At go-live, the State anticipates utilizing five (5) newly provisioned telephone numbers. These will not be existing agency voice numbers. Vendors should assume messaging will be implemented using newly provisioned telephone numbers. Number porting of existing telephone numbers from the current vendor is not anticipated. See Amendment 6 above.

Question 6: Attachment A, Section II. Functional/Technical Requirements, A. System Requirement/Capabilities, Item 31: Attachment A identifies voice call functionality as a MANDATORY requirement. Will the State accept a solution in which voice call capability is delivered through an integrated Communications Platform as a Service (CPaaS) provider (such as Twilio or a comparable HIPAA- eligible carrier) rather than natively built into the vendor's platform? If so, please confirm whether the vendor must identify the specific CPaaS partner and describe the integration architecture within the proposal.

Response: No, the State will not accept a solution in which voice capability is not included in the proposed solution.

Question 7: Attachment A, Section II. Functional/Technical Requirements, A. System Requirements/Capabilities, Items 36 and 37; and RFP, Section VIII. Cost Information Submission: If actual usage exceeds the message volumes included in the vendor's proposed pricing, how should vendors provide unit pricing for overages by channel, and how should those overage rates be reflected in lifecycle cost scoring?

Response: See Amendments 7 and 9 above. The State does not guarantee the quantity listed in the Usage Based Pricing table, these numbers are estimates and are for proposal evaluation purposes only. However, the state does require the unit price per communication channel.

Question 8: Attachment A, Tables 1 and 2b: Table 1 and Table 2B appear to include slightly different response, resolution, and incident timeframes. Can the State clarify which incident types would trigger a service credit?

Response: Table 1 has been revised and now aligns with the corresponding service credits identified in Table 2b. See Amendment 8 above.

Question 9: RFP, Section II. Proposal Submission Requirements, Item 3: Can the State confirm whether a printer copy of the proposal is required in addition to the USB submission?

Response: Printed copies of a proposal response are not required. Vendors are required to submit one response of the completed proposal, including all sections, attachments, and exhibits, on a USB flash drive.

Question 10: RFP, Section II. Proposal Submission Requirements, Item 5: If the proposal requires an original wet signature, can the State clarify how the electronic version should reflect that signature? For example, should the electronic

version include no signature, an electronic signature, or an image of the wet signature?

Response: The electronic version should reflect the image of a wet signature. The “original signature in blue ink” can be a wet signature or a PDF of the signed document. However, the signature cannot be electronically signed.

Question 11: RFP, Section II. Proposal Submission Requirements, Items 5 and 9 and ITS RFP Response Checklist: Please confirm the required physical submission package. Should vendors submit one USB flash drive containing the complete proposal plus original wet-signed Submission Cover Sheet and Configuration Summary, or is a full paper copy/binder of the proposal also required? For the USB, does ITS prefer one combined searchable PDF, separate files for each RFP section/exhibit using the RFP headings, or both?

Response: Printed copies of a proposal response are not required. Vendors are required to submit one response of the completed proposal, including all sections, attachments, and exhibits, on a USB flash drive. The format of the USB drive is at the discretion of the Vendor, as long as all required documentation is included, clearly organized, and searchable in RFP order.

Question 12: RFP, Section II. Proposal Submission Requirements, Item 8: Can the State confirm whether vendors should include only the RFP sections identified in the response checklist?

Response: Vendors must include all items listed in the RFP Response Checklist. The State's guidance strongly suggests that vendors should include all RFP sections in their response document to ensure completeness and avoid being deemed non-responsive.

Question 13: RFP, Section II. Proposal Submission Requirements, Item 9.1: Can the State clarify whether vendors are required to include RFP sections that do not request a direct vendor response?

Response: Vendors must include all items listed in the RFP Response Checklist. The State's guidance strongly suggests that vendors should include all RFP sections in their response document to ensure completeness and avoid being deemed non-responsive. Vendors are required to submit one response of the complete proposal on a USB flash drive. Vendors should list and clearly explain any exceptions, for all RFP Sections and Exhibits, on the Proposal Exception Summary Form.

Question 14: RFP, Section II. Proposal Submission Requirements, Item 9.5: The RFP instructs vendors to respond to the sections and exhibits in the same order as the RFP, while also directing vendors to label the file names of each section and exhibit using the corresponding RFP headings. Can the State clarify whether it's acceptable to submit one consolidated proposal document organized in RFP order?

Response: Yes, this is acceptable as long as the document is clearly organized and searchable in RFP order.

Question 15: RFP, Section II. Proposal Submission Requirements, Item 9.5: Does the State want the Cost Proposal in a separate file?

Response: **The Cost Proposal is not required to be in a separate file. The format of the proposal response is at the discretion of the Vendor, as long as all required documentation is included, clearly organized, and searchable in RFP order.**

Question 16: RFP, Section IV. Legal and Contractual Information, Item 13.3: Will all vendor payments be made through PayMode in the MAGIC ERP system?

Response: **Yes, all payments will be made through Paymode.**

Question 17: RFP, Section VI. RFP Questionnaire, Item 2.1: Vendors must provide proof of good standing from the Mississippi Secretary of State. For vendors incorporated in another state but authorized to do business in Mississippi, is a Certificate of Good Standing from the vendor's state of incorporation sufficient, or must the vendor provide a separate Certificate of Authority specifically issued by the Mississippi Secretary of State? Please confirm the acceptable documentation.

Response: **The Vendor must provide a Certificate of Authority specifically issued by the Mississippi Secretary of State.**

Question 18: RFP, Section VII. Technical Specifications, Item 5: The General/Vendor Qualifications category is worth 10 points. Please clarify how WIC-specific program experience is weighted within this category. Is prior WIC experience a pass/fail disqualifier, or is it a scored element within the 10-point bucket? If scored, will the State consider analogous experience serving other regulated government health, nutrition, or benefits programs as a partial or full substitute for direct WIC- specific experience?

Response: **Scoring will be evaluated based on the Vendor meeting the requirement for each category, within a 10-point bucket.**

Question 19: RFP, Section VII. Technical Specifications, Item 5.2.5: The RFP states that reference sites should if possible be located in the Southeastern United States. If a vendor does not have a reference site in the Southeastern US, will reference sites in other regions be considered equally, or will the absence of a Southeastern reference site negatively affect scoring?

Response: **If a Vendor does not have a reference site in the Southeastern US, reference sites in other regions will be considered equally.**

Question 20: RFP, Section VIII. Cost Information Submission: To help vendors plan staffing and pricing appropriately, can the State provide an estimate of the anticipated onsite travel required during the contract term?

Response: **MSDH is unable to provide this information at this time.**

Question 21: RFP, Exhibit A. Standard Contract, Article 3.2 U.: Can the State confirm whether a vendor-provided plan for transitioning all State data at contract termination or expiration satisfies the transition requirements, or whether the State expects additional transition activities to be included?

Response: Yes, a Vendor provided plan for transitioning is acceptable.

Question 22: RFP, Exhibit A. Standard Contract, Article 3.2 F. and Article 4.4: Article 3.2.F requires 99.98% uptime, while Article 4.4 sets availability at 99% and ties the 25% monthly service credit to that 99% threshold. Can the State clarify which percentage is the binding SLA, and against which threshold is the service credit calculated?

Response: See Amendment 1 above.

Question 23: RFP, Exhibit A. Standard Contract, Article 9.3: and RFP, Exhibit B. Business Associate Agreement (BAA), Section III. Obligations and Activities of Business Associate (BAA), Item i: Article 9.3 of the Standard Contract references SSAE 16 (SOC 1) and SOC 2 examinations as audit framework requirements. Exhibit B, Section III(i) references SOC 2 Type II or FedRAMP Moderate. In the event of any conflict between these provisions, which controls? Will the State accept SOC 2 Type II as the sole audit framework satisfying both Article 9.3 and Exhibit B Section III (i), or must vendors separately satisfy both SOC 1 (SSAE 16) and SOC 2 requirements?

Response: The State will accept SOC 2 Type II as the sole audit framework satisfying both Article 9.3 and Exhibit B Section III (i).

Question 24: RFP, Exhibit B. Business Associate Agreement (BAA): Are vendors required to sign and include the BAA as part of our proposal response?

Response: No, Vendors are required to sign a BAA if awarded the contract.

Question 25: RFP, Exhibit B. Business Associate Agreement (BAA): Can the State confirm whether the signed BAA will be required only on contract award?

Response: Yes, Vendors are required to sign a BAA if awarded the contract.

Question 26: RFP, Exhibit B. Business Associate Agreement (BAA), Section III. Obligations and Activities of Business Associate (BAA), Item i: Exhibit B, Section III(i) requires that cloud providers maintain SOC 2 Type II or FedRAMP Moderate (or higher) accreditation. Does this requirement apply to the vendor's cloud infrastructure provider (e.g., AWS, Azure, Google Cloud), to the vendor's own SaaS application platform, or to both independently? If the vendor's application is hosted on a FedRAMP Moderate- authorized cloud infrastructure (e.g., AWS), does that satisfy the cloud accreditation requirement at the infrastructure layer?

Response: This requirement applies to the SaaS application platform that MSDH will be using to store, transmit, or process data. If the Vendor application is in an approved environment, then to meet FedRAMP moderate certification, there would necessarily be controls between the SaaS environment and the Vendors backend, which satisfies this requirement.

Question 27: RFP, Exhibit B. Business Associate Agreement (BAA), Section III. Obligations and Activities of Business Associate (BAA), Item j: Exhibit B, Section III (j) states that the Business Associate will be monitored and scored in UpGuard and must maintain an appropriate score per the MSDH Vendor Risk Management Policy. Please provide or confirm where vendors can obtain a

copy of the MSDH Vendor Risk Management Policy referenced in this section, and confirm the minimum acceptable UpGuard score or risk category threshold required to remain in compliance throughout the contract term.

Response: Please refer to the Vendor Risk Management Policy attachment.

Question 28: **Messaging channels.** Is RCS (Rich Communication Services) also a required or evaluated channel?

Response: RCS is not a required channel. However, the State would be interested in researching if the need for this channel arose in the future. Vendors are encouraged to provide costs on the Optional Items Pricing Table of the Revised Cost Information Submission form. See Amendment 9 above.

Question 29: **Participant and appointment data.** What is the source system and data format for WIC participant and appointment data? Is the vendor expected to integrate directly with a State system (API / HL7 / FHIR), or will data be provided via a scheduled file or feed?

Response: The system will not be integrated. Source system and data format information is not required. Data will be provided via a scheduled file.

Question 30: **Volumes.** Can you provide historical and projected message or member participation volumes to properly gauge infrastructure growth over the next five years?

Response: The State is only able to provide data for the last 6 months. Please see below the usage data for January 2026- June 2026.

Item	Usage						Units
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	
Messaging Records	22797	17425	20450	29818	15553	18969	Records
Call Duration Overage	5101.5	4020	4513.5	6666.5	3501.5	4664	Minutes
Texts Received	15693	10734	12014	15513	8589	10216	Texts
Outbound Texts	1604	37605	42731	56674	29719	36567	Texts
Inbound Calls to Text-Enabled Numbers	181	92	116	151	94	115	Minutes
Inbound Texts	1604	1092	1161	1582	854	1086	Texts
Email Subscriber	3751	2259	2167	1795	930	1276	Emails
Response to Received Text	10134	7453	8804	12565	6648	8126	Texts

Question 31: **Support model.** Attachment A III.A specifies a help-desk minimum of Monday-Friday, 8:00 AM-5:00 PM CST, with phone and email support, ticket tracking, and escalation. For this participant-facing messaging system, is after-hours or 24x7 support coverage valued or scored beyond that stated minimum, and is there an expected after-hours path for critical (e.g., delivery-outage) incidents?

Response: 24 x 7 support coverage and After-hour services are not required for this RFP.

Question 32: **Incumbent.** Can you identify the incumbent vendor and/or the current contract value for the existing WIC messaging service, or point to the public contract record?

Response: The State is not at liberty to disclose the current contract information through this Questions and Answers process. State contracts are available at www.transparency.ms.gov.

Question 33: What are the State standards for self-service and reporting related to create/edit/suspend/deactivate accounts; admin functions (accounts, backup/restore, export, reports)

Response: **Approval must be obtained from the MSDH User Management Group before any accounts are created, edited, suspended, and deactivated. The group must have access to administrative functions within the system. The process can be assessed upon contract execution.**

Question 34: **Transition / cutover.** Will the incumbent vendor be required to provide a data export including participant records, message history, and opt-out/consent status? Does existing participant consent (prior express consent) transfer to the awarded vendor, or must consent be re-collected before messaging resumes?

Response: **No, there will not be a transition from the incumbent vendor. Consent must be re-collected before messaging resumes.**

Question 35: RFP, Section II. Proposal Requirements and Section VIII. Cost Information Submission: What historical data must be migrated or retained from any existing system, including opt-in/opt-out records, consent history, message logs, chat histories, audit trails, and reporting history?

Response: **No historical data will be migrated to the awarded vendor. This includes, but not limited to, customer records, opt-in/opt-out records, consent history, message logs, chat history, templates, or other data.**

RFP responses are due on Wednesday, September 2, 2026 at 3:00 p.m. (Central Time).

Attachment: Vendor Risk Management Policy MSDH

cc: ITS Project File Number 48935