



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

DIVISION OF State-Operated Specialty Care

**REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (NON- IT SERVICES)
for
Canteen Operations**

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SECTION 1: PURPOSE, BACKGROUND, AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

1.1 Purpose and Background.

The purpose of this Request for Information (RFI) is to allow all interested parties to provide the Agency with information to assist the Agency in preparation of a Request for Grant Application (RFGA) or a Request for Bid (RFB).

The Iowa Department of Health and Human Services, hereafter known as the Agency, is seeking information regarding **Canteen Operations Fair Market Value**.

This section describes the current canteen operations on the Iowa Health and Human Services Independence Mental Health Institute (IMHI) campus. Through this RFI process, the Agency seeks to obtain information on canteen services going forward. The information provided in this background section is for historical purposes and not a guarantee of future service levels and/or IMHI population.

Background Information for the Project.

IMHI provides inpatient psychiatric care to adults, adolescents, and children from the eastern half of Iowa. The current operating capacity is fifty-six beds. IMHI population is made up of approximately thirty-six children and adolescents and twenty adults residing in three separate living units. Patients’ age range from seven to ninety-nine years old and are independent in their activities of daily living with a small number of exceptions. Patient census and/or population served are subject to change by the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services Director, Governor or Iowa legislature. In addition, FourOaks rents space from IMHI with a population around 16 (subject to change) adolescent patients plus staff. MHI staff roughly consists of just under 200 employees and contractors. The public is welcome to visit the canteen.

IMHI has had a canteen operation for well over 100 years which was originally run by a patient and later taken over by the hospital. Since July 1, 1988, the hospital has contracted out the canteen operations in cooperation with the Iowa Department of the Blind and their respective Blind Managers

Patient population census and employee numbers are subject to change upwards or downwards at the discretion of the state. IMHI is accredited by Joint Commission.

1.2 Relevant Dates

Event	Date
Agency Issues RFI	4/3/26
RFI Responses Due from interested parties	4/17/2026

Issue RFGA/RFB (Tentative date)	
RFGA/RFB Decision to Award Contract (Tentative date)	
Contractor Begins Implementation (Tentative date)	

1.3 Submission of Response

This request requires any interested party wishing to submit information to respond to this Request for Information (RFI) by 11:59 PM on the date listed in the table above.

The interested party’s response should be e-mailed to the Agency at the email provided in section 1.4. Responses will not be accepted over the telephone. However, the Agency reserves the right to make telephone contacts or follow up on information submitted in any manner deemed appropriate by the Agency.

1.4 Contact Information

The contact at the Agency for technical questions and submission of responses will be:

Name of HHS Contact:	Jessica Dawes
Email Address:	Jessica.dawes@HHS.Iowa.Gov

1.5 Administrative Matters

1.5.1 This RFI is designed to provide interested parties with the information necessary for the preparation of an appropriate response. It is not intended to be comprehensive, and each interest party is responsible for determining all factors necessary for submission of a comprehensive response.

1.5.2 The Agency reserves the right to modify this RFI at any time.

1.5.3 Responses should be based on the material contained in this RFI or any other relevant information the interested party thinks is appropriate.

1.5.4 By submitting a response each interested party agrees that it will not bring any claim or have any cause of action against the Agency, the State of Iowa, or any employee of the Agency or the State, based on any misunderstanding concerning the information provided or concerning the Agency’s failure, negligent or otherwise, to provide the interested party with pertinent information as intended by this RFI.

1.6 Review and Rejection of RFI Responses

1.6.1 The Agency reserves the right to reject any and all responses, in whole and in part, received in response to this RFI at any time.

1.6.2 An RFI response may be rejected outright and not reviewed for failure of the interested party to deliver the response by the due date. Therefore, interested parties are asked to make every effort to meet the RFI timelines and to include the requested information.

1.6.3 An RFI response will not be subject to a RFP type of evaluation but only a review of information in the RFI.

1.7 Public Records and Requests for Confidentiality

1.7.1 The release of information by the Agency to the public is subject to Iowa Code Chapter 22 and other applicable provisions of law relating to the release of records in the possession of a State agency. Interested parties are encouraged to familiarize themselves with these provisions prior to submitting a RFI response. All information submitted by an interested party may be treated as public information by the Agency unless the interested party properly requests that information be treated as confidential at the time of submitting the response.

1.7.2 Any requests for confidential treatment of information must be included in a cover letter with the interested party's RFI response and must enumerate the specific grounds in Iowa Code Chapter 22 or other legal reasons which support treatment of the material as confidential and must indicate why disclosure is not in the best interests of the public. The request must also include the name, address and telephone number of the person authorized by the interested party to respond to any inquiries by the Agency concerning the confidential status of the materials.

1.7.3 Any documents submitted which contain confidential information must be marked on the outside as containing confidential information, and each page upon which confidential information appears must be marked as containing confidential information. The confidential information must be clearly identifiable to the reader wherever it appears. All copies of the proposal submitted, as well as the original proposal, must be marked in this manner.

1.7.4 In addition to marking the material as confidential material where it appears, the interested party must submit one copy of the RFI response from which the confidential information has been excised. The confidential material must be excised in such a way as to allow the public to determine the general nature of the material removed and to retain as much of the document as possible. These pages must be submitted with the cover letter and will be made available for public inspection.

1.7.5 The interested party's failure to request in the RFI response confidential treatment of material pursuant to this Section and the relevant laws and

administrative rules will be deemed by the Agency as a waiver of any right to confidentiality which the interested party may have had.

1.8 Copyrights

By submitting a response the interested party agrees that the Agency may copy the response for purposes of facilitating the internal review of the information or to respond to requests for public records. The interested party represents that such copying will not violate any copyrights in the materials submitted.

1.9 Restrictions on Gifts and Activities

Iowa Code chapter 68B contains laws which restrict gifts which may be given or received by state employees and requires certain individuals to disclose information concerning their activities with state government. Interested parties are responsible for determining the applicability of this chapter to their activities and for complying with these requirements. In addition, Iowa Code chapter 722.1 provides that it is a felony offense to bribe a public official.

1.10 Cost to Interested Party

The Agency is not responsible for any costs incurred by an interested party which are related to the preparation or delivery of the response, any on-site inspection that may be required, or any other activities related to this RFI.

1.11 Responses Property of Agency

All printed information used in the interested party's response becomes the property of the Agency. The Agency will have the right to use ideas or adaptations of ideas that are presented in the responses.

1.12 Sources of Information Used by the Agency in Addition to the Responses

The Agency reserves the right to contact interested parties after the submission of responses for the purpose of clarification and to ensure mutual understanding.

1.13 No Obligation to Issue Request for Proposal (RFP) or Request for Bid (RFB)

The issuance of this RFI in no way constitutes a commitment by the Agency to issue a RFP, RFB or contract for the project described in this RFI.

1.14 Interested Party Responses Identifying Information

Responses must include the following identifying information:

Identify the name and principal place of business or residence of the

interested/responding party.
Identify the interested party's type of business organization/entity such as a corporation, partnership or educational institution.
Identify the interested party's state of incorporation, if applicable.
Provide the name, address, email address, and telephone number of the interested party representative to contact regarding all technical matters concerning this RFI.

1.15 Interested Party References

Responders should have a minimum of 5 years experience in the food service industry with a preference of 10 years experience.

SECTION 2: INFORMATION SOUGHT

This RFI has been issued to obtain information only and is not intended to directly result in a contract or agreement with any Respondent. The Agency is seeking insight, expertise, and information from the community of experts. There is no current, definitive plan to purchase any services as a direct result of responses to this RFI. The Agency will thoroughly review all feedback submitted in its ongoing examination of options.

This solicitation for information does not commit the Agency to publish an RFP or award a contract. The issuance of a RFP, because of information gathered from these responses, is solely at the discretion of the Agency. Should an RFP be issued, it will be open to all qualified applicants. Responding to this RFI is not part of and should not be construed as a pre-qualification process.

The Agency encourages Respondents who may only have experience in particular segments of the products or services described herein to respond to help provide a full picture of the industry offerings.

This is not an RFP where bidders respond with a specific solution to Agency specifications, including cost. An RFP process is a separate process with further defined requirements. If a cost is requested in an RFI, it will be for budget estimation purposes only.

Goal – The first goal is to realize a fair and equitable price for the use of the property and reasonable sale prices for the items sold at the Canteen and vending machines. The second goal is to provide a social environment for patients and staff.

Key Objectives – Described below are key objectives that the Agency would be interested in:

- **Experience** – Briefly share Respondent’s organization, and experience in canteen and/or vending machine operations.
- **Cost Containment** – Suggestions for the Agency to consider for cost containment.
- **Operations** – How should the Agency approach operations to maintain customer/patient services as much as possible but address cost containment?
- **Vending Operations** – What suggestions do you have for vending operations?
- **Products** – What products and services should the Agency consider for cost containment purposes?
- **Hours of Service** – What hours of service should the Agency consider, if different than current hours?
- **Pricing Methodologies** – Describe potential pricing methodologies including how Respondent’s would envision billing and reimbursement for providing services.
- **Agency** – Outline how you see services being provided and what role, if any, the Agency should take in providing these services.
- **Expansion / Contraction** – Hospital funding is primarily through the Iowa legislature which would mean for the Canteen expanding or shrinking services based on greater funding needs. Suggestions you would have to address expansion or contraction.
- **Examples** – Share specific examples of how to reduce costs and yet still provide products and services within a social environment.
- **Suggestions** – Include any additional comments, suggested alternative, as deemed appropriate based on Respondent’s knowledge and expertise, that you feel would be beneficial to the Agency?

SECTION 3: OTHER FEATURES

Is there any other feature, service or option you believe the Agency should be aware of in preparation of an RFP? If so, please describe the feature, service product or option and explain how it would improve the program served as identified in this RFI.

Technical Details:

- **Fair Market Value/Costs** - IMHI currently wishes to seek information on canteen services from private sector independent Contractors to determine fair market value and service considerations to patients, families, staff and the public.
- **Service** - The Canteen consists of counter service, whereby a variety of food and beverages are served. This includes but not limited to hot food items, such as sandwiches, and side orders. Ice cream, salads, baked goods and candy are also offered, along with a wide selection of beverages. A grill, deep fat fryer and baking oven are utilized.
- **Cost Constraint** – Due to patients normally having limited financial resources a few products are kept lower to allow patients to have some form of treat, such as a pop and candy bar.

- **Vending** - Vending machine operations are available in two locations on campus with a variety of products and machines. After Canteen hours, staff visit the vending machines for food, snacks and/or beverages. Vending machines may be added or removed as needs change.
 - **Vending Machines** – One smart cooler, two snack units, three beverage units and microwave stations.
- **Social Environment** – The Canteen not only provides food and beverage but also a social outlet for patients and staff on a daily basis, which has value for patient social skills.
- **Patient Interaction** - The Canteen staff provide direct interaction and service to locked psychiatric patients, families, staff and the public.
- **Staff** – Current staff include a Manager and several employees that may be full or part time.
- **Hours of Operation:** (Subject to change and approval of management.)
 - **Monday through Thursday** 8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
 - **Friday** 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
 - **Saturday** 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
 - **Sunday** Closed
 - **Holidays** - The Canteen shall be closed for the following State holidays: New Year's Day, Memorial Day, July 4th, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas. The Canteen may be closed for additional scheduled or unscheduled State holidays upon notification of an agreement with IMHI's Business Manager (or designee).
- **Prohibited Items and Services**
 - Alcoholic beverages
 - Cigarette and other tobacco products
 - Over-the-counter medications
 - Beverages in glass bottles. All beverage containers must be sold in non-glass, shatterproof containers
 - Razors and scissors or other items as determined by IMHI as sharps or weapons.
- **Food Restrictions** – Some patients may have specific food restrictions.
- **Laws, Regulations, Policies and Procedures** - The Contractor(s) must ensure that it, and applicable staff, complies at all times with all local, state and federal laws, regulations, policies and procedures as may be amended from time to time.
- **Permits and Licenses** - Contractor(s) is responsible for obtaining at its own expense, all permits and licenses necessary for the operation of the canteen. A copy of the Department of Health approval shall be filed with the IMHI prior to commencement of service at the canteen.
- **Health Code** – Contractor shall meet all applicable, state, local, federal and Joint Commission sanitation laws, codes, and regulations, in connection with the performance of service.
- **Confidential Information** – All information on patient activities and services are considered confidential. Contractor staff shall be required to sign IMHI confidentiality documentation. Background checks would be required.

- **Third Party Contractors** – No third-party partners/contractors will be allowed as party to the service without the express written consent of the Agency.
- **Catering** – Contractor will be available to provide catering services and/or box meals for IMHI upon request.
- **Contractor Costs:**
 - **Independent Contractor** – Contractor would be an independent contractor.
 - **Equipment** - Contractor would need to purchase grill, fryer, cooler(s), freezer, oven, and vending machines.
 - **Inventory** – Contractor owns the inventory.
 - **Employees** – Employees would be those of the Contractor and not state employees.