

Questions & Answers RFP - 152605

The following questions/requests have been submitted concerning RFP 152605 – Interpreting Services. None of the questions (below) received indicated a need for a change to the RFP document. Thus, no Addenda will be issued. All questions received by various firms have been answered, even if asked by another firm. The questions below are provided verbatim from what was received and are grouped by inquiring firm.

Note: This is the first time the Districts have produced a joint agreement for Interpreting Services. Both Districts prior to this agreement received Interpreting Services individually and there may be different answers on payment from the past contracts by each District compared to this current RFP.

Whether companies from Outside USA can apply for this? (From India or Canada)

Companies outside of the USA can submit a proposal, but as stated under Section I. INTRODUCTION & GENERAL INFORMATION, in paragraph 2,

“Responders are requested to have a “home” office (a permanent resident contact) within one hundred (100) miles of the center of the I-10 Bridge spanning the Escambia River (See Figure 1 below), to allow active interaction between the Districts’ contacts for the proposed services and the winning contractor(s).”

Whether we need to come over there for meetings?

Yes. At all times there will be meetings were the awarded service provider(s) will be asked to attend.

Can we perform the tasks (related to RFP) outside USA? (From India or CANADA)

No. The tasks related to this RFP are direct contact tasks performed by Interpreters with the students physically at the Districts’ schools.

Can we submit our proposals via email?

No. Proposals may not be submitted via email. Proposals will only be accepted in hardcopy format in a sealed envelope.

What are the hourly rates being paid for interpreting services on the current contract for normal business hours, nights/weekends, and "emergency" rates in Escambia County?

The current rates depend on whether the interpreter holds credentials. The currently hourly rates are as follows: Interpreters without recognized credentials or certifications - \$22/hr. Interpreters with recognized credentials or certification - \$33/hr with no differentiation of the level of credentialing or time of day for either group. There is a proposed change in this breakdown in the current RFP. Emergency rates are not currently in place.

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What are the hourly rates being paid for interpreting services on the current contract for normal business hours, nights/weekends, and "emergency" rates in Santa Rosa County?

The hourly rates remain the same regardless of the time. Emergency rates are not currently in place. The current hourly rates are as follows: Interpreters with recognized credentials or certifications – 34.48 per hour. Interpreters without credentials – 26.52 per hour. Please note there is a change from this breakdown of credentials in the 2015 RFP.

See Section BID SPECIFICATIONS, Part Payment, on page 9 of the current contract.

“Pay rate will be paid by half hour increments and will be based on student school hours. The hourly rate will not fluctuate with time of service.

Hourly rates will remain the same during this contract unless a price index is stated in the vendors bid, (increments of increase if necessary). The hourly rate will not fluctuate with time of service.

Hourly rates will vary based on Interpreters credentials. Interpreters without credentials will be paid a lower hourly rate as compared to those holding a recognized credential or certification of interpreting skills.”

Do the Districts use (would this contract include) VRI and, if so, what are the hourly rates being paid for VRI on the current contract for normal business hours, nights/weekends, and "emergency" rates?

This contract does not include VRI.

Do the Districts use (would this contract include) remote CART and, if so, what are the hourly rates being paid for remote CART on the current contract for normal business hours, nights/weekends, and "emergency" rates?

This contract does not include CART.

Does the current contract pay a minimum number of hours per day and, if so, what is the minimum number of hours paid?

Escambia County School District Response:

As per the current contract in place and the proposed RFP, the Interpreter must contact the Contract Manager and the Vendor/Provider if an assigned student is absent. The Contract Manager may assign the interpreter to a different student/worksites depending upon the current need for student coverage on that given day or the working hours may be reduced to two hours of service for that specific day if there is no need for additional student coverage.

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Santa Rosa School District Response:

See Section BID SPECIFICATIONS, Part Schedules, on page 8 of the current contract,

“If the assigned student is absent the Interpreter must call the Contract Manager and Vendor /Provider as soon as possible. School District Contract Manager may assign the interpreter to a different worksite or working hours may be reduced to two hour service for that specific time of that day.”

Approximately how many students would be covered under this contract / what has been the average number of students receiving services, per semester, for the past two years?

See Section V. SCOPE OF WORK OR SERVICES, Part D. Schedules, on page 14.

The amount of students covered under this contract will vary based on student needs. Responder services are being requested for two entire school Districts that may have increases or decreases of attending students throughout the school year and subsequent years.

Escambia County School District Response pertaining to the past average number of students receiving services:

On average, contracts 10-12 interpreters per year based on currently enrollment and student needs.

Santa Rosa School District Response pertaining to the past average number of students receiving services:

On average, contracts 2-4 interpreters per year based on enrollment and current student needs.

Do the Districts pay for travel and/or mileage on the current contract?

Escambia County School District Response:

Travel expenses are only paid if an interpreter is assigned to more than one school site on the same day. Under the current contract, the Contract Manager has exercised discretion to provide travel reimbursement in situations where student need dictated services in an extremely rural area, far removed from most reasonable within District travel.

Santa Rosa School District Response:

See Section BID SPECIFICATIONS, Part Payment, on page 9 of the current contract,

“Travel expenses will only be paid if an interpreter is assigned at two (2) different schools on the same day. A reimbursement form will be provided by the district. The reimbursement rate will be set at the current School District travel rate of .445 per mile.”

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Are any classes/assignments teamed and, if so, how is that determined?

Neither District has “teamed” assignments at the current time. That determination is made on a case by case basis by the Program Facilitator for Deaf & Hard of Hearing with input from the Teacher for Deaf & Hard of Hearing and interpreter(s).

Are all interpreters providing services required to be nationally certified and, if so, which certifications do you accept?

See Section V. SCOPE OF WORK OR SERVICES, Part C. Acceptable Credentials/ Certifications, on page 13 and the graph on page 14.

Question #1 (refer to Item “I” of Part II – General Terms and Conditions)

Once written notification is received from either District to stop the work represented by this RFP award (assumed to be limited to cancelling the services of one (1) interpreter), will it be permissible to invoice for additional days of previously booked/committed work that the individual interpreter, through no fault of their own, now has to forfeit? PI suggests allowing for (2) additional days of billing, as this is considered the industry norm for on-going/full-time assignments.

A Stop the Work Order is absolute. All services must cease and desist. No, responders may not Invoice for work that has not been performed after a Stop the Work Order has been received.

Question #2 (refer to Paragraph 4 under Item “C” of Part III – Special Conditions)

For the CPI calculation for Year 3 and beyond, is the formula based on utilizing the rate from the previous year, or using the rate from 2015 for each year? This paragraph seems to indicate that the calculation will be based on “the initial Agreement year rate” each year. This appears to be a mechanism to apply a “cost of living” increase to the negotiated rates, but if we are understanding this paragraph correctly then there is a very real possibility that the rate might have to DECREASE between successive years, but never below the initial negotiated rate. PI suggests it might be more feasible to include additional language explaining that the new rate may never be lower than the rate from the year before, but may increase if an increase is warranted by the CPI calculation (which would be based on the previous year, not the initial Agreement year rate for each succeeding year).

See Section V. SCOPE OF WORK OR SERVICES, Part C. Consumer Price Index (CPI), on page 8, paragraph 2,

“If there is a decline in the CPI for any given year, compensation will not be reduced lower than the initial Agreement year rate.”

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Question #3 (refer to Paragraph 3 under Item “D” of Part V – Scope of Work or Services)

Please clarify that daily hours approved to be invoiced will be at the hours the individual school is in session, and will NOT be capped at 7 hours as stated (e.g., Holm Elementary School currently requires 8.5 hours of interpreting services daily).

Escambia County School District Response:

See Section V. SCOPE OF WORK OR SERVICES, Part D. Schedules, on page 14,

“Working hours rely on student hours, not exceeding seven (7) hours on a regular school day.”

Work hours typically rely on student hours. However, Holm Elementary is an extended day school due to the history of student performance on state wide standardized assessments. However, this will not be supported if Holm Elementary does not remain on the extended day list for the state or if interpreters are not actively following through with the responsibility of planning/preparing with teachers on a daily basis. The contract manager has the discretion to limit the workday to the length of the student day if this additional time is not being used effectively by contract interpreters.

Santa Rosa School District Response:

See Section BID SPECIFICATIONS, Part Schedules, on page 8 of the current contract,

“Working hours rely on student hours, not exceeding seven (7) hours on a regular school day.”

Question #4 (refer to Part VIII – Time Schedule)

Will the evaluations of the bids be tape recorded, or available to the public to attend in person (with no direct involvement, of course)? This is SOP with other Escambia County departments in bid situations, but we are not clear if the ECSD and/or the SRCSD operate under the same requirements. It is our opinion that all bidders should have an opportunity to hear or witness where they fell short, if they are not awarded the contract.

The evaluation of the proposals will be tape recorded and the public may attend. The public may not speak unless asked a question for verification. These are part of our standard procedures.

Question #5 (refer to Rate Form)

Our internal rate system is more in-depth than the rate system shown in the RFP, based on years of loyal service, and training/education/skill level beyond that demonstrated in a particular certification or degree. Is it permissible to show only the “Price Per Hour” on this form, and leave the “Employee Hourly Pay Rate” and “Administrative Fee” blank? Publicizing a breakdown of hours in this manner will lead to strife within the interpreting pool, or will force the awarded Responder(s) to revert to a pay-for-certification-only billing system which will either grossly inflate the rates of less skilled interpreters, or will force the most skilled interpreters working in our area to effectively take pay cuts.

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See Section VII. PROPOSAL FORMAT AND EVALUATION CRITERIA, Part B. Cost/Rate Form, on page 17.

Note that the Cost/Rate Form is not only a part of the evaluation criteria for awarding, but also consists of the highest possible point value of all evaluated criteria. Everyone is given the equal opportunity to respond.

Also, as stated in the last paragraph under Section VII. PROPOSAL FORMAT AND EVALUATION CRITERIA, on page 17,

“Points will be awarded based on the responses in each proposal received. Lack of a response for any item above will receive (0) zero points for that item. All attachments shall be clearly marked and reference the appropriate item. Additional information may be submitted by the Responder, however, the evaluation committee shall be solely responsible for determining the weight if any such information will be assigned.”

Question #6 (General Question)

Please clarify (if known at this time) if a tiered award system will be implemented as with the last ECSD Bid (i.e., a “Primary” award, and one or multiple “Secondary” awards), or will multiple Responders simply be awarded a part of the overall contract? Please provide a detailed explanation of how you anticipate work will be assigned post-award.

See Section I. INTRODUCTION & GENERAL INFORMATION in paragraph 2,

“This solicitation may be awarded to more than one responder. The contract(s) resulting from this solicitation will be for services on an as needed-basis. There is no guaranteed minimum.”

Also, see Section II. SPECIAL CONDITIONS, Part A. Term of the Agreement, on page 8,

“This solicitation may be awarded to up to three (3) responders if the Districts find it to be in their best interest and to meet their needs.”

All responders will be evaluated based on the listed evaluation criteria and up to the top three responders will be awarded the contract.