

RFP 50-000-14-00002 Telephone Based Interpreter Services – Questions and Answers

#	Question	Answer
1.	<p>Attachment F (Reference Questionnaire) states that our clients need to return the questionnaire by December 18th. However, on page 23 Number 6 Organizational References, indicates that business references need to be submitted by December 9th.</p> <p>Could you clarify which date is the final deadline for these questionnaires to be submitted?</p>	<p>Reference questionnaires are due to the Procurement Manager no later than December 18, 2014 at 5:00 pm MST.</p> <p>See RFP Amendment #1 for the correction of dates.</p>
2.	<p>Whether companies from Outside USA can apply for this ?? (From India or Canada)</p>	<p>This RFP is restricted to companies located within the United States.</p> <p>See RFP Amendment #1</p>
3.	<p>Whether we need to come over there for meetings ??</p>	<p>For this procurement, the Pre-proposal conference will be a teleconference and the service tests (if any) will be done by telephone as well.</p> <p>Work performed in relation to this contract may require in-person meetings as outlined in individual state Participating Addendums.</p>
4.	<p>Can we perform the tasks (related to RFP) outside USA?? ((From India or Canada)</p>	<p>Interpreter services for the most frequently used languages must be performed within the United States from a professional facility and not a home-based office. Interpreter services for the least frequently used languages may be performed outside of the United States and/or from a home-based office.</p> <p>“Most frequently used languages” means the top ten frequently used languages within each Participating State.</p> <p>See RFP Amendment #1.</p>
5.	<p>Can we submit our proposals via email ?</p>	<p>No. As outlined in Section III, proposals can only be submitted one of two ways:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. By mailing or delivering a hard copy of the proposal to

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		<p>the Procurement Manager at the address listed in Section I.E on page 4.</p> <p>2. Submitting through eProNM electronically as outlined in Section III.C on page 20. Submission info at the following address: http://www.generalservices.state.nm.us/statepurchasing/onlineprocurement.aspx</p>
6.	Proposal Evaluation: who will be on the Sourcing Team?	The sourcing team consists of procurement professionals from each state involved with this procurement: New Mexico, Washington, Connecticut and Florida.
7.	Contract Awards: what is the basis of having a more advantageous proposal without having the points to reflect that?	As outlined in Section V.A “a serious deficiency in any one criterion may be grounds for rejection [of the proposal]” or if the Offeror is determined not to be a Responsible Offeror as outlined in NMSA 13-1-133.
8.	Contract Awards: what does Lead State approvals mean?	Contract awards for this procurement are subject to final approvals by the Lead State of New Mexico and the NM State Purchasing Agent pursuant to applicable state statutes and rules.
9.	4 Subcontracts: it is industry standard to work with independently contracted interpreters, or subcontractors. Do these independent linguists need approval?	<p>Yes, if the linguists are identified as subcontractors by your company you must get approval for their use by including the list with your proposal and by obtaining approval for each state’s Participating Addendum.</p> <p>The use of subcontractors may be further restricted in each state’s Participating Addendum.</p>
10.	28 Estimated Usage: Do you have these numbers in number of minutes or calls?	<p>The estimated usage amounts reflect an estimate of the first two years of the contract resulting from this procurement based on the historical data provided from the listed states.</p> <p>The amounts reflect the total billed amounts for an annual period, based on total minutes charged each month.</p>
11.	7 Service Testing: Since this is required to be done at no cost, how many	At the discretion of the sourcing team, one test call will be made to each finalist Offeror. The test calls will be for no more than 5

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	calls will you make and how many minutes will the calls last?	minutes.
12.	B. Evaluation Factors: Is Factor number 7, the cost factor, being evaluated by dividing the contractor’s bid by the lowest responsible bid and multiplying it by the available award points (other than cost points)?	No. See Section V.A.1. The cost points will be calculated by dividing the lowest responsive offeror’s bid by each individual offeror’s bid and then multiplying by the available cost award points. The lowest offered cost will receive the total available cost points (400) and all other offerors will receive proportionally lower cost points based on the cost they offered in relation to the lowest offer.
13.	27A Summary and Detailed Usage Report: it looks like item B is referring to reporting for products (bill to/ship to locations, Purchase order type, ship date, etc). Can you modify this to be applicable for services?	<p>WSCA/NASPO requires the listed information for quarterly reporting. Each awarded offeror is required to submit the reports with the information applicable to each contract – therefore you will submit to them only the information that applies to this contract. (i.e. you do not need to list a ‘Ship Date’ if you are not shipping goods, but must list all other requested identifying information)</p> <p>The information requested on the Detailed Sales Report may be changed at the discretion of the Lead State and contract manager in order to capture all relevant sales data for future sourcing purposes.</p>
14.	28, F, 1: this puts a large amount of risk on the contractor.	As outlined in Section II.C.15 and 16: Offerors must list any exceptions to the contract terms and conditions as part of their proposal and must offer specific, alternate language.
15.	Attachment B, 6: The contractor performs all services on this contract virtually and by phone. There will be no New Mexico employees. Does this apply to those outside of New Mexico? Does this apply to independent contractors?	<p>New Mexico Pay Equity requirements apply only to those employees working within the state of NM.</p> <p>Refer to the FAQs at the following page for more information: http://www.generalservices.state.nm.us/statepurchasing/Pay_Equity.aspx</p>
16.	Attachment C: Will you require outbound calls to be initiated by the contractor? If so, will you add a line item for third party calls?	<p>Yes. Outbound calls or third-party calls are required under the scope of work in this RFP and shall be included at no additional cost.</p> <p>No, a separate line item for the third party calls will not be added.</p>

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		The service is to be all-inclusive and Offeror's should include the cost for the third-party calls into the one price being offered for the services in their Cost proposal.
17.	Attachment F: Question 4 asks for a level of satisfaction with hard-copy materials. What do you mean by this?	This question refers to the quality of the hard copy materials (instructional materials, informational posters, etc.) provided by your company to customers.
18.	Attachment G: Are these average connection times measured on a monthly basis?	Yes, as outlined in Attachment G, connection times must be included on the monthly invoicing submitted by the awarded contractor and average connection times will be calculated each month based on these detailed invoices.
19.	Attachment G: can you please clarify point 4 and the "self-assessed penalty"?	Attachment G "Connection" point 4 requires the awarded offeror to report on each detailed monthly invoice the total number of "no interpreter available" calls as well as the "interpreter connection time". Based on these monthly reports, the awarded offeror is required to itemize and deduct from the monthly invoice total: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The cost of the call for Spanish, Russian, Somali, Vietnamese, Tagalog, Korean or Farsi should it not begin within 60 seconds of the language being identified 2. The cost of the customer's average interpreter call for the month when any request for Spanish, Russian, Somali, Vietnamese, Tagalog, Korean or Farsi results in a customer being told "no interpreter is available,"
20.	Attachment G: Invoicing is done per minute via industry standard. Are you able to amend the Invoicing procedure to reflect industry standard?	No. The current contract requires billing of 1/10 th of a minute which allows the Participating States to have more accurate reporting of the contract use and to realize cost savings billing per minute would not allow.
21.	Attachment G, 5: Is it possible for this information to accompany the Invoice? There is a lot of information being asked for that is not standard to Invoices, such as total number of calls resulting in an interpreter connection time greater than 60 seconds.	Yes. This information is currently required and provided on the WSCA contract for telephone interpreter services and other similar contracts with participating states. Attachment G – Equipment and Facility requires that

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		<p>“Contractor’s telephone terminal equipment must be capable of collecting the detailed call traffic information needed to produce the reports required by the contract.” If the offeror does not meet the mandatory requirements as listed in Attachment G and Section IV, the Offeror does not qualify to submit a proposal.</p>
22.	It is industry standard to bill per minute	The contract resulting from this procurement will require billing at 1/10 th of a minute as outlined in Attachment G.
23.	Historical Usage: the data is not complete or understandable – there are three entries per language for Spanish in Washington, for example. Can you provide the volume per contractor?	See Amendment #1. The historical data for the State of WA has been broken down by contractor.
24.	Historical Usage: are there only two states committed to using this?	<p>Attachment H lists historical usage data for the state of NM, WA, CT and FL.</p> <p>As outlined in RFP Amendment #1 and Section II.C.26 and 27 – Ten states have identified an ‘Intent to Participate’ in this cooperative procurement, and other states and entities may potentially sign after the award process. But this information is provided solely for the purpose of assisting bidders in preparing their response and does not represent a warranty of future usage.</p> <p>The State of NM, the participating states and WSCA do not represent or guarantee any minimum purchase.</p>
25.	Is it an option to submit the prf completely electronically when using the NM esystem?	<p>Yes. If you submit the proposal through the eProNM website you do not need to submit any hard copies. See Section II.C on page 20.</p> <p>Submission info at the following address: http://www.generalservices.state.nm.us/statepurchasing/onlineprocurement.aspx</p>
26.	Do you need/provide a confidentiality/non-disclosure agreement?	No, we do not require a confidentiality/non-disclosure agreement.
27.	You stated estimated usage, purchases over the initial two years for several states and quoted them in a dollar amount. What equation was	The estimated usage is based off the different pricing associated with each state’s historical usage data. See RFP Amendment #1 for the pricing associated with each state’s historical usage in

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	used to calculate the estimated usage (\$/min)?	Attachment H.
28.	With multiple awards to this contract, how are task orders from the various States and agencies assigned to the approved vendors?	Each state has its own procedures for determining who they will sign a Participating Addendum with out of those awarded a Master Agreement. The state of NM intends to sign a Participating Addendum with each vendor awarded a Master Agreement and using agencies and local public bodies will make their own determination of which vendor with whom to contract for services based on what is in the best interests of that entity.
29.	How do you verify that vendors really can comply with Technical Requirements on Attachment 8? Knowing that responding with a “no” will lead to a Non-Response and rejected, vendors who know they are unable to comply will answer “yes” just to keep from being rejected.	<p>The RFP will assess a vendor’s ability to perform the scope of services outlined in the RFP based on responses to each specification outlined in Section IV.B.1-11. Vendors’ responses to the requirements in Attachment G will be verified by their responses to Section IV.B. to ensure the Offeror can meet the level of service as required.</p> <p>Contract management and oversight will assure adherence to the requirements outlined in Attachment G with the possibility of terminating a contract in cases where the contractor cannot perform the level of service as required and outlined in this RFP.</p>
30.	<p>Per Attachment G: item #4 “ Interpreter Services must be provided from a professional facility and not from the interpreter’s home or other non professional setting.” Question: Would WSCA-NASPO consider eliminating this requirement, due to the high probability that no language service provider could truthfully meet this requirement? Given the extensive list of languages being requested by WSCA-NASPO members, it would be virtually impossible to provide interpreting for such languages in a “ brick and mortar” model.</p>	<p>Interpreter services for the most frequently used languages must be performed within the United States from a professional facility and not a home-based office. Interpreter services for the least frequently used languages may be performed outside of the United States and/or from a home-based office.</p> <p>“Most frequently used languages” means the top ten frequently used languages within each Participating State.</p> <p>See RFP Amendment #1.</p>
31.	Attachment G of RFP 50-000-14-00002 (WSCA-NASPO Master Agreement for Telephone Based Interpreter Services) states that interpreter Services must be provided from a professional facility and not from the interpreter’s home or other non-professional setting.	Refer to Question & Answer 29 above.

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	<p>Given the diversity of the language mix, the most cost-effective method for providing professional interpreter services would often include the use of home-based professional interpreters. Would WSCA-NASPO consider allowing for the inclusion of home-based agents provided that the offeror could enforce comparable security and quality assurance measures?</p>	
32.	<p>Attachment G, Question 4: “Interpreter Services must be provided from a professional facility and not from the interpreter’s home or other non-professional setting”: it is impossible for this to occur and still meet the connection time requirements. If someone calls for a rare language and there is no one in the call center or “professional setting”, there is no interpretation. Interpretation by telephone is based on the fact that there will be calls connected to interpreters working out of their home office, which is a professional setting. The contractor recommends amending this statement.</p>	<p>Refer to Question & Answer 29 above.</p>
33.	<p>On page 56, there is a mention that “Interpreter Services must be provided from a professional facility and not from the interpreter’s home or other non-professional setting.” Because the language list contains uncommon languages, would an alternative solution being a virtual call center be accepted?</p>	<p>Refer to Question & Answer 29 above.</p>
34.	<p>It is a standard Industry Practice for telephonic interpreters to work in a professional home office setting designated specifically for the purpose of interpretation via telephone. How does this industry standard of professional home offices effect vendor adherence to subsection 4 under the Equipment and facility section noted in the Attachment G?</p>	<p>Refer to Question & Answer 29 above.</p>
35.	<p>Attachment G : Interpreter Services must be provided from a professional facility and not from the interpreter’s home or other non-professional setting.</p> <p>Other than for primarily Spanish language, the telephonic interpretation industry utilizes “work at home” interpreters. Spanish also often largely</p>	<p>Refer to Question & Answer 29 above.</p>

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	<p>via “work at home” particularly for higher skill levels.</p> <p>We suggest a modification of the technical requirement that asks or specifies: Describe how you ensure that your “work at home” interpreters deliver service in a professional manner (similar to the controls of a call center environment?). How do you monitor it?</p>	
36.	<p>On Page 56 Attachment G: Technical Requirements, Equipment and Facility number 4 stating that interpreter services must be provided from a professional facility and not from the interpreter’s home or other non-professional setting. We respectfully ask for modification or withdraw this requirement, as it is standard practice to work with a combination of in-house employed interpreters, in the office setting and independent contract interpreters, working from a home office.</p>	<p>Refer to Question & Answer 29 above.</p>
37.	<p>On page 59, the customer indicates a list of minimal requirements that must be provided in the monthly invoice. Would all the required information need to appear on the same document, or can it be broken down into an invoice with billing information and then separate reports indicating the requested usage/fulfillment information?</p>	<p>The information requested to be included with the monthly invoices are necessary for monthly contract management and review. This information is reviewed and verified prior to approval of invoices for payment.</p> <p>Vendors may submit the requested usage information in a report separate from the invoice, but invoices will not be accepted or approved without all required reporting information being submitted concurrently.</p>
38.	<p>Is the customer experiencing any “pain points” with their current vendor(s)?</p>	<p>End users have documented issues with background noise such as children and animals during calls as well as poor telephone connectivity and issues with the interpreters’ ability to speak English. There are also documented issues with interpreters not explicitly following the directions of the using agency or public customer – for instance, not hanging up a call when requested.</p>
39.	<p>Offerors should identify or seek to clarify any problems with contract language or any other document contained within this RFP through their written inquiries about the RFP using the question and answer process in Section 1.</p>	<p>The clause refers to a necessary standard of performance for the services provided under this RFP. It outlines the options for a participating state should a contractor not perform the services in conformance with the requirements of the Master Agreement and therefore will not be amended or removed. The risk</p>

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	<p>Pg 42 F 1. by contract or otherwise, perform the services and charge to the Contractor any cost incurred by the State Purchasing Agent or other party to this Agreement that is directly related to the performance of such service; or</p> <p>We request the clause be struck or modified if a negotiation is possible as it presents unlimited risk to vendor and this is a multi-award RFP.</p>	<p>associated with this clause is limited only to the awarded vendor for that specific Master Agreement – meaning each awarded vendor will have a separate Master Agreement so having multiple awards will not affect the terms specific to each contract.</p> <p>As outlined in Section II.C.15 and 16 – should offerors still have exceptions with the terms and conditions included in Attachment A and Attachment B, they are to submit with their proposal a complete list of alternative/additional terms and conditions they expect to have included in the resulting contract, if awarded.</p>
40.	<p>B RFP Objective: The Lead State/Sourcing Team, with the assistance as deemed advisable of the relevant Participating State (or relevant group of Participating States), may evaluate and select an Offeror for award in more limited geographical areas (e.g. a single state) where judged to be in the best interests of the Participating Entity involved.</p> <p>Since telephonic interpretation is not geographically based from an end user standpoint, what specific best interests, characteristics, or other criteria would determine why a one vendor would be given preference over another for a limited geographical area or State(s)?</p>	<p>This clause does not refer to giving preference to any specific vendor. It refers to the requirement that the Offerors who submit a proposal must be able to provide the services for all participating states in the WSCA/NASPO cooperative. However, we will accept and may award a proposal that is limited to one specific geographic area (e.g. one state) if it is determined to be in the best interests of that Participating State to do so. It is not possible to know what circumstances would create such a situation at this time in the procurement process.</p>
41.	<p>It is the Offeror’s responsibility to ensure the completed forms are received on or before December 9, 2014 at 5:00 pm for inclusion in the evaluation process....</p> <p>a) Offerors must submit the following information for each Business Reference as part of their proposal:</p> <p>Can you confirm to vendors on or shortly after December 9th the received Questionnaire Attachment F forms, as often the best intentions do not occur and clients do not send or send to wrong address etc, and since we need to provide supporting information in our proposals it would help if we knew what actually was received by your office?</p>	<p>**Reference questionnaires are due to the Procurement Manager no later than December 18, 2014 at 5:00 pm MST. This error has been addressed in RFP Amendment #1.**</p> <p>Yes. The procurement manager will email confirmation of the Reference forms received as of December 15th in order to allow the opportunity to contact your references prior to the due date. The procurement manager will then email all Offerors on December 19th the final list of the Reference Forms received that will be evaluated with their proposals.</p>

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42.	<p>WSCA-NASPO Master Agreement WSCA-NASPO Master Agreement(s) resulting from this RFP will constitute the final agreement except for negotiated terms and conditions specific to a Participating Entity’s Participating Addendum. The Contractor may adjust the Master Agreement pricing accordingly for purchases made by Purchasing Entities within the jurisdiction of the state. All such agreements shall not affect the WSCA-NASPO Administrative Fee or the prices paid by the Purchasing Entities outside the jurisdiction of the state requesting the additional fee.</p> <p>Could you confirm that other a price adjustment upwards allow for different Statee PA admin fees, Vendors may NOT lower their price below that stated in the WSCA-NASPO Master Agreement? If not able to confirm, please describe how lower prices would be allowed outside the Master Agreement?</p>	<p>This clause refers to Participating States who may choose to impose a fee specific to their state for all purchases within that state in addition to the .25% WSCA admin fee. Vendors may choose to negotiate higher pricing in these states that include an additional admin fee when negotiating the individual Participating Addendums once awarded a Master Agreement. This does not affect the WSCA .25% admin fee or the prices paid by other Participating States.</p> <p>Vendors may also choose to negotiate lower pricing when negotiating individual Participating Addendums based on expected usage, volume, etc. The pricing included on the Master Agreements are ceiling prices that can always be negotiated downward when executing individual Participating Addendums.</p>
43.	<p>Is there a maximum percentage Admin Fee that a State may charge?</p>	<p>No. Each state will follow their own state rules and regulations regarding the admin fee they will charge on their Participating Addendums.</p>
44.	<p>Must the admin fee charged by a State be the same for all vendors holding WSCA-NASPO Master Agreement’s under this RFP?</p>	<p>Each state’s administrative fee will be specified in the Participating Addendums signed with each awarded vendor and may vary based on each state’s statutes and rules.</p> <p>The state of NM will assess the 1% admin fee on all awarded contracts – which will only apply to sales within the state of NM.</p>
45.	<p>EXPERIENCE OF THE CONTRACTOR</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bidder must have at least two years of experience in providing Telephone Based Interpreter Services to state or local government entities on a 365-days a year, 7-days a week, 24-hours a day basis. 2. Bidder must currently be providing an average of at least 100,000 minutes of Telephone Based Interpreter Service calls per month within the past year. <p>In order to <u>prove</u> the above technical requirements, shouldn't the</p>	<p>No. Attachment G is a list of minimum requirements that all Offerors must meet or exceed in order to provide the service outlined in this RFP. The specifications listed in Section IV will allow for an evaluation of the Offeror’s ability to provide the service, and if necessary the sourcing team can request additional information to verify Offeror’s responses.</p>

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	<p>respondents provide:</p> <p>Documentation showing statistics within the last 12 months that include: the total number of the call volume in minutes, total average of call volume minutes, and a breakdown by customer name, identifying if the customer is a local government (city, county, etc.) or state department, total number of calls and total average of calls, total number of call minutes and total average of call minutes. As well as including a grand total of each column to prove meeting the 100,000 minutes per month. Perhaps the contracting officer can provide an appropriate spreadsheet to populate.</p>	
46.	<p>Attachment G, 3: is this the SLA in the current contract?</p>	<p>No. Attachment G includes requirements specific to this solicitation, but nearly all requirements are included in the current contract.</p>
47.	<p>Attachment G, Invoices: Would you consider changing the Invoice requirements to the reporting requirements? Reporting is different than the actual Invoice that is sent monthly.</p>	<p>No. The information requested to be included with the monthly invoices is necessary for monthly contract management and review. This information is reviewed and verified prior to approval of invoices for payment and must therefore be submitted with each invoice.</p> <p>Vendors may submit the requested usage information in a report separate from the invoice, but invoices will not be accepted or approved without all required reporting information being submitted concurrently.</p>
48.	<p>Attachment G, 4: Is this condition for “connection time in Spanish, Russian, Somali, Vietnamese, Tagalog, Korean, or Farsi does not begin within 60 seconds of the language being identified, the customer shall not be charged for their calls” in the current contract?</p>	<p>Yes.</p>
49.	<p>Attachment G, 4: If this condition is in the current contract, how many times was it assessed?</p>	<p>This information was not readily available at the time of this procurement. The current contract administrator does not maintain information based on this specific condition, but can provide more information if necessary. Refer to the following website for more info:</p>

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		https://fortress.wa.gov/ga/apps/ContractSearch/ContractSummary.aspx?c=03508
50.	Attachment G, 4: The contractor recommends putting stipulations for volume on these SLAs. If the contract is experiencing volumes above their peak connect times to these languages will be longer. If there is no guarantee of volume, it is difficult to justify these SLAs.	See Attachment G, Section I.B and Section IV.B. Any offeror submitting a bid must have the appropriate operational abilities to provide the required level of service in all participating states, as well as the ability to meet a significant increase in call volume and duration. If the offeror does not meet the mandatory requirements as listed in Attachment G and Section IV, the Offeror does not qualify to submit a proposal.
51.	What if the customer asks for medically qualified or legally qualified interpreters?	Qualified medical and legal interpretation is not included under the scope of work in this procurement and will not be covered under the scope of the resulting contract.
52.	Does the current contract require billing to be in 1/10 th of a minute?	Yes.
53.	Service tests: how many calls will be placed? Will the contractor know the date of the calls?	At the discretion of the sourcing team, one test call will be made to each finalist Offeror. The test calls will be for no more than 5 minutes. The calls will take place during the evaluation period, but Offerors will not be notified of the date or time.