COUNTY OF ALAMEDA

Questions & Answers

to

RFP No. 902069

### for

Multilingual Interpretation Services

**Networking/Bidders Conference Held on February 10, 2022**

|  |
| --- |
| **This County of Alameda, General Services Agency (GSA), RFP Questions & Answers (Q&A) has been electronically issued to potential bidders via e-mail. E-mail addresses used are those in the County’s Small Local Emerging Business (SLEB) Vendor Database or from other sources. If you have registered or are certified as a SLEB, please ensure that the complete and accurate e-mail address is noted and kept updated in the SLEB Vendor Database. This RFP Q&A will also be posted on the GSA Contracting Opportunities website located at** [**Alameda County Current Contracting Opportunities**](https://gsa.acgov.org/do-business-with-us/contracting-opportunities/)**.** |

Description: Description: branding.jpgAlameda County is committed to reducing environmental impacts across our entire supply chain.

If printing this document, please print only what you need, print double-sided, and use recycled-content paper.

Thank you for your participation and interest in the County of Alameda.

All the questions are direct copy and paste from written questions emailed by Bidders. In the answers of these questions, the County of Alameda shall be noted as “County”. The Questions and Answers are the final stance of the County. Please consider this document in preparation of your bid response.

**Questions and Answers:**

1. Whether companies from Outside the USA can apply for this?
   1. **No, companies from outside of the United States of America (USA) cannot apply or bid on this RFP.**
2. Whether companies from Outside the USA can apply for this? (like, from India or Canada)
   1. **Please refer to A1 response.**
3. Can we perform the tasks (related to RFP) outside the USA?
   1. **No, the tasks or contractor requirements cannot be performed from outside the USA.**
4. Can we submit the proposals via email?
   1. **Per the RFP, page 24, SECTION S (SUBMITTAL OF BIDS), item 4. states as follows:**

**4. No email (electronic) or facsimile bids will be considered.**

1. Are you able to provide your current incumbent pricing/information?
   1. **Please refer to the chart below.**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Language Categories** | | **Unit of Measure** | **Year 1- 3  Unit Cost** |
| Category 1 - Spanish | Per Minute | | $ 0.64 |
| Category 2 - Other | Per Minute | | $ 0.69 |

1. Are there any specific requirements regarding the location/base of the interpreters?
   1. **Interpreters must be based in the USA.**
2. What type of data is collected by current vendors?
   1. **Please refer to RFP Pages 8-9, Section E; Deliverables and Reports.**
3. Will there be opportunities to integrate interactive voice response (IVR) with regards to Over-the-Phone Interpretation (OPI)?
   1. **No, there will not be an opportunity to integrate IVR with regards to OPI.**
4. Are you able to provide an approximate annual or monthly volume breakdown of Over-the-Phone Interpretation usage?
   1. **Please refer to the attached Usage Report.**
5. Can you provide an example of a monthly usage report for the County?
   1. **Please refer to the attached Usage Report.**
6. Are you able to provide an approximate language mix breakdown for interpretation services, or an example of a month of usage per minute with a language breakdown (Ex. 50% Spanish, 20% Arabic, 10% Farsi, 5% Tagalog, etc)
   1. **Please refer to the attached Usage Report.**
7. Are you able to provide the estimated total interpretation spend for the last calendar year?
   1. **Total Interpretation spend for last calendar year is approximately $1,495,000.**
8. The list of required languages includes a significant number of rare languages which globally have a smaller pool of language speakers and interpreters. Many times, these languages need to be supported on an appointment-only basis. Is this something the County has seen with their current and previous language service partnerships?
   1. **No, this is not something the County has seen.**
9. Regarding the SLAs outlined in the RFP document, 10 seconds for Spanish and 15 for all other languages—what are the penalties for not meeting those SLAs?
10. Language rarity and population of global language speakers is going to directly impact connection times and interpreter availability
11. Call flow/setup will impact connection times
    1. **The expectation is that all requirements of the contract will be met.**
12. What percent SLA fulfillment does the incumbent vendor have for meeting 10 seconds for Spanish and 15 for AOL ICT expectations?
    1. **The incumbent meets the contract requirements for the connection.**
13. Are any written translations required by the County? If so, could you please address the following?
14. Can you please provide the estimated spend for Translation Services in previous year?
15. For Translation Services, are you able to provide volume breakdown by language?
16. What challenges do you currently face with Translation Services?
17. What are the typical file formats for submitting translations?
18. Can you please provide additional information regarding required Turnaround Times for Translation Services?
    1. **No. Translation services are not part of the contract and RFP.**
19. Is the County planning to award a single vendor to fulfill these services?
    1. **Yes.**
20. Who is the current incumbent(s)?
    1. **Language Line Services.**
21. What issues have you experienced with the performance of this contract in the past?
    1. **No performance issues have been reported.**
22. Are you happy with the current incumbent?
    1. **The County is satisfied with the current incumbent.**
23. What were the rates awarded to the incumbent?
    1. **Please refer to A5 response.**
24. Are there any special circumstances or “hot buttons” of which we should be aware?
    1. **None.**
25. How far in advance is each call typically requested? Or are all calls on-demand?
    1. **All calls are on-demand except rare languages.**
26. 10 seconds for Spanish and 15 seconds for other languages is considered low. Can we propose our own timeframes in our proposal that are longer than this?
    1. **It is expected that the contract requirements will be met. Please refer to the RFP, Specific Requirements, page 6, Section D, No. 1.**

**For any Exceptions and Clarifications to the RFP and associated Bid Documents, Bidder should use the Exceptions and Clarifications form on Exhibit A. Please note that the County is under no obligation to accept any exceptions and clarifications and any such exceptions and clarifications may be a basis for bid disqualification.**

1. The solicitation states, “Contractor shall work with County departments to identify and/or modify equipment required to deliver multilingual interpretation services efficiently and effectively at no additional charge.” Our interpreters will have access to their own equipment for the calls. Does the County expect us to provide any equipment to the county for the telephonic services? Will the County be able to use their own phones for the calls?
   1. **Yes, the County will be able to use their own phones for the calls. The County does not expect equipment to be provided for telephonic services.**
2. Can you provide the Excel spreadsheet as follows unless the county wants us to use the chart on page 34 of the Word file? “Bidders **must** submit pricing on the Excel Spreadsheet – Bid Form in EZSourcing Supplier Portal.”
   1. **Per Exhibit A, Page 7 (BID FORM) Bidder must use the Excel Bid Form provided. The bid form is provided as a separate Excel form.**
3. We are listed as a Woman-Owned Small Business under GSA and SAM but we are not obtained official certification. Our NAICS code is 541930. We are authorized to do business in the state of California but our main office is in MD. The solicitation states, “Bidders must meet the County’s Small and Emerging Locally Owned Business requirements in order to be considered for the contract award… For purposes of this bid, applicable industries include, but are not limited to, the following NAICS Code(s): 541930, 611630, and 611710.” However, on page 31 it states as follows. Are we qualified to bid? “The undersigned acknowledges **ONE** of the following (please check only one box):

Bidder is not local to Alameda County and is ineligible for any bid preference; **OR**

Bidder is a certified SLEB at the time of bid submittal and is requesting 10% bid preference; (Bidder must check the first box and provide its SLEB Certification Number in the SLEB Information Sheet); **OR**

Bidder is LOCAL to Alameda County and is requesting 5% bid preference, and has attached the following documentation to this Exhibit”.

* 1. **The RFP is open to all bidders. SLEBs certified by the County of Alameda is eligible for up to 10% bid preference points (5% certified SLEB and 5% local).**

**If a bidder is neither a County certified SLEB or local to Alameda, they are not eligible for any preference points, as such, the 1st box would apply. Certified SLEBs that are bidding as a prime is eligible for up to 10% bid preference points. Bidders would check the 2nd box. If bidders are not SLEB certified by Alameda County but are local to Alameda, they are eligible for up to 5% preference points and would check the 3rd and last box.**

**Bidders that are not certified SLEBs are required to subcontract at least 20% of the total value of the contract to one or more certified SLEB. Bidders may choose to take an exception, however, the County is under no obligation to accept any exceptions or clarifications and any such exceptions and clarifications may be a basis for bid disqualification**

**Alameda County SLEB Program Overview [**[**http://acgov.org/auditor/sleb/overview.htm] Alameda County SLEB Program Additional Information [https://gsa.acgov.org/do-business-with-us/vendor-support/small-local-and-emerging-businesses**](http://acgov.org/auditor/sleb/overview.htm%5d%20Alameda%20County%20SLEB%20Program%20Additional%20Information%20%5bhttps:/gsa.acgov.org/do-business-with-us/vendor-support/small-local-and-emerging-businesses)**/]**

1. Should we only submit the bid packet starting on Exhibit A?
   1. **Yes, Please refer to page 26; Section T; Response Format for instructions on Bid submittal and Exhibit A – Bid Response Packet and Instructions.**
2. Is our entire response need to be pasted under Exhibit A or can we include our own template?
   1. **Please use the template provided for Bid submissions. Per the Bid Response Packet, Exhibit A; “Bidders shall not modify the Bid Response Packet or any other County-provided document unless instructed to do so.”**
3. Can the forms be signed via DocuSign or do you require original signatures?
   1. **Yes, DocuSign Signatures are acceptable.**
4. Is it OK to enter more than one bid? If we submit as a prime, can we also be the SLEB partner on other prime’s RFPs?
   1. **The bidder may bid as prime and partner as a SLEB with another prime bidder.**
5. Who is the incumbent supplier? Can you describe any issues you have had with the current supplier?
   1. **Please refer to A18 and A19 responses.**
6. What is the current pricing structure?
   1. **Please refer to A5 response.**
7. Can you share the logs showing 10 second connect times?
   1. **Please refer to the attached Usage Report.**
8. Was the incumbent’s contract renewed for 5 years? Or are we at the 3 year mark now?
   1. **The contract’s five-year term is up for renewal.**
9. What is the estimated value of the proposed contract?
   1. **The County does not provide this information. Please refer to A5 response for the current pricing structure.**
10. Can you show the reports you want generated?
    1. **Please refer to the attached Usage Report.**
11. What is the average per-minute monthly call volume for telephone interpretation?
    1. **Please refer to the attached Usage Report.**
12. What percentage of monthly calls are for Spanish?
    1. **Please refer to the attached Usage Report.**
13. Can provide a list of the most requested languages with the average number of minutes per month per language?
    1. **Please refer to the attached Usage Report.**
14. Who is the current incumbent and what are their rates?
    1. **Please refer to A5 and A18 responses.**
15. Has the County had any difficulties with the current incumbent?
    1. **Please refer to A20 response.**
16. Do you anticipate making a single award or multiple awards on this contract?
    1. **Please refer to A17 response.**
17. Is this a small business or veteran-owned set-aside?
    1. **This is not a small business or veteran-owned set-aside.**
18. How many companies are expected to compete for this RFP?
    1. **All companies that meet the minimum qualifications are invited to bid.**
19. Is there a budget allocated to this contract? If yes, how much?
    1. **The County does not provide the allocated budget. Please refer to A5 response for the current pricing chart.**
20. Why are you considering changing vendors?
    1. **The contract term has expired. The County goes out to bid at the end of the contract term.**
21. What is the County looking to improve or achieve with the new vendor?
    1. **The County is satisfied with the current vendor.**
22. Do you have any restrictions on the use of offshore sources? If yes, please describe.
    1. **Please refer to A1 response.**
23. Do you require the successful bidder to run “brick and mortar” call centers (i.e., have facilities that house telephonic interpreters) or do you allow for a work from home model?
    1. **There is no restriction on brick and mortar. Work-from-Home model is allowed.**
24. Do you ever require the telephone interpreter to connect additional parties to the call? If so, how frequently does this occur? And do you ever require an additional third-party connection?
    1. **Yes, there may be an occasional need to connect additional parties to the call. There is no record of frequency.**
25. For particularly rare languages or dialects, are you willing to pre-schedule phone interpreting where the need for interpreter is known ahead of time?
    1. **All languages on the list cannot be pre-scheduled ahead of time. Calls must be completed within the maximum time stated.**
26. Does the current vendor need to collect any information during the call?
    1. **There may be circumstances during which information may need to be collected during the call.**
27. Will the County require any custom reporting?
    1. **Please refer to the RFP, pages 8-9; Section E; Deliverables and Reports.**
28. Are there any additional requirements/skills that have not been mentioned already required from the interpreters?
    1. **Interpreters must meet the requirements of the RFP.**
29. Do you currently have any languages on staff or have in-house interpreters/translators? If so, for what purpose?
    1. **There are no in-house interpreters or translators.**
30. Will you notify all participants of the results or only the awardee?
    1. **All bidders will be notified of the results.**
31. Would the County consider revising the bid form? Some of those extremely rare languages have a higher cost than other languages.
    1. **No, the County cannot revise the bid form.**

**For any Exceptions and Clarifications to the RFP and associated Bid Documents, Bidder should use the Exceptions and Clarifications form on Exhibit A. Please note that the County is under no obligation to accept any exceptions and clarifications and any such exceptions and clarifications may be a basis for bid disqualification.**

1. Does the County currently utilize an online platform/portal for interpreter requests and scheduling? If so, are you paying an additional monthly fee outside of the interpreting rates?
   1. **No, the County does not utilize an online platform.**
2. If we do not partner with a SLEB, will our bid be considered non-responsive?
   1. **Bidders are required to subcontract at least 20% to a certified SLEB. If bidders are unable to meet the SLEB requirement, the bidder may take an exception.**

**For any Exceptions and Clarifications to the RFP and associated Bid Documents, Bidder should use the Exceptions and Clarifications form on Exhibit A. Please note that the County is under no obligation to accept any exceptions and clarifications and any such exceptions and clarifications may be a basis for bid disqualification.**

1. Will you be sending a list of all the attendees to the pre-bid conference? And also a copy of the presentation?
   1. **The List of Attendees was posted on February 22, 2022. Copies of the presentation are not provided.**

**ESTIMATED USAGE REPORT**

| **Language** | **Minutes** | **Calls** | **Avg Length Of Calls** | **%Total** | **Connect Time (Seconds)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |
|  |
| **AMHARIC** | 47 | 4 | 11.8 | 0.20% | 68 |  |
| **ARABIC** | 511 | 44 | 11.6 | 2.50% | 11 |  |
| **BULGARIAN** | 9 |  |  | 0.00% | 1 |  |
| **BURMESE** | 70 | 3 |  | 0.30% | 1 |  |
| **CANTONESE** | 1,076 | 72 |  | 5.30% | 6 |  |
| **DARI** | 108 | 8 | 13.5 | 0.50% | 283 |  |
| **FARSI** | 359 | 29 | 12.4 | 1.80% | 147 |  |
| **HINDI** | 51 | 3 | 17 | 0.30% | a.a |  |
| **ITALIAN** | 4 |  | 4 | 0.00% | a.a |  |
| **KAREN** | 73 | 4 | 18.3 | 0.40% | 1 |  |
| **KHMER** | 62 | 4 | 15.5 | 0.30% | 43 |  |
| **KOREAN** | 296 |  | 21.1 | 1.50% | 6 |  |
| **MAM** | 98 | 7 | 14 | 0.50% | 8 |  |
| **MANDARIN** | 719 | 50 | 14.4 | 3.60% | 41 |  |
| **MIEN** | 13 |  | 13 | 0.10% | 0 |  |
| **MONGOLIAN** | 132 | 5 | 26.4 | 0.70% | 0 |  |
| **NEPALI** |  |  | 40 | 0.20% | 1 |  |
| **PASHTO** |  | 3 | 24.7 | 0.40% | 225 |  |
| **PORTUGUESE** | 142 | 6 | 23.7 | 0.70% | 1 |  |
| **PORTUGUESE BRAZILIAN** | 104 | 5 | 20.8 | 0.50% | 0 |  |
| **PUNJABI** | 227 | 16 | 14.2 | 1.10% | 0 |  |
| **RUSSIAN** |  |  | 14 | 0.10% | 1 |  |
| **SPANISH** | 14,612 | 1,246 | 11.7 | 72.60% | 16 |  |
| **SWAHILI** | 12 | 2 | 6 | 0.10% | 0 |  |
| **TAGALOG** | 230 | 15 | 15.3 | 1.10% | 0 |  |
| **TIBETAN** | 145 | 2 | 72.5 | 0.70% | 50 |  |
| **TIGRIGNA** | 117 | 9 | 13 | 0.60% | 8 |  |
| **URDU** | 46 |  | 46 | 0.20% | 105 |  |
| **VIETNAMESE** | 706 |  | 12 | 3.50% | 1 |  |
| **YEMENI ARABIC** | 22 | 1 | 22 | 0.10% | 21 |  |
| **TOTAL** | 20,119 | 1,617 | 12.4 | 100% | 19.5 |  |