

Allegheny County
Department of Human Services
Request for Proposals Q&A
RFP for Language Assistance Services

April 8, 2022

#	Question	Response
1	Whether companies from Outside USA can apply for this? (like, from India or Canada)	Yes, companies from outside the USA can apply for this as long as DHS can legally negotiate a contract with them.
2	Whether we need to come over there for meetings?	No, meetings do not need to be in-person.
3	Can we perform the tasks (related to RFP) outside USA? (like, from India or Canada)	Yes.
4	Can we submit the proposals via email?	Yes. Email is the only way to submit proposals. Please email your submission to DHSProposals@AlleghenyCounty.US

April 13, 2022

#	Question	Response
5	What is the anticipated and/or historical volume per month for phone interpretation and video interpretation?	The historic volume per month for phone/video remote interpretation is 5,690 minutes. This volume is expected to double.
6	What is your historical volume and spend for written translation?	DHS spent \$70,000 in Written Translation for the FY20-21 and anticipates spending \$100,000 for FY21-22.
7	What is the anticipated contract value?	The contract value is set at \$100,000.

8	How much did your organization spend on written translation in 2021?	We spent \$70,000 on written translation for FY20-21.
9	How much did your organization spend on remote interpretation (phone/video) in 2021?	We spent \$150,000 on phone/video remote interpretation during FY20-21 and anticipate spending \$220,000 for FY21-22.
10	What is the current rate?	Language services rates vary. Telephone, in person, ASL and video remote interpretation ranges between \$60-\$65 per hour. Written translation ranges between \$0.19-0.28 per word.
11	Does your organization participate in a Group Purchasing Organization (GPO)? If so, which one?	No, DHS does not participate in a GPO.
12	Translator Requirements: "Prior training, certification and professional experience demonstrating the ability to effectively and reliably perform the Language Assistance Services described in this RFP. Experience providing Language Assistance Services within the field of human services is strongly preferred." Does this mean that all translators used to complete work for Allegheny County must possess a certification of some kind? Or are training and experience without a certification sufficient?	Yes, all translators/interpreters working for Allegheny County must be certified in their respective language(s).
13	Are HIPAA-compliant translators required on all translation projects, or just on those for which the content includes PHI/PII?	Yes, HIPAA-complaint translators/interpreters are required for all projects.
14	Translator requirements: "Legally authorized to work in the U.S." Does this mean that we are restricted to only using translators who live and work in the U.S.? Or is it acceptable to use translators from other countries, for whom legal authorization to work in the U.S. would not apply?	Yes, for the purpose of this RFP, translators/interpreters must be legally authorized to work in the United States.
15	Can you please provide a breakdown of usage/budget by service line?	FY20-21 – ASL - \$30,000, In-person, telephone and video remote

		interpretation - \$150,000, Written translation - \$70,000
16	May vendors elect to only bid on telephone interpreting, video interpreting, and written translations?	Yes, vendors can bid only for telephone/video remote interpretation and/or written translation.
17	Approximately what percentage of Allegheny's annual usage/budget is for onsite interpreting (spoken language and sign language)?	DHS's Program and Support Offices pay for their own language service expenses. These budgets/expenses vary from one Program and Support Office to the other.
18	How many interpretation minutes per month do you anticipate needing?	We are anticipating needing between 5,690 - 7,000 interpretation minutes/month.
19	How many words per month do you anticipate needing to be translated?	Our translation needs vary from month to month.
20	Can you please share the number of minutes or frequency (as a percentage) of each language requested from the previous year?	Please refer to question 21.
21	Are you able to share the approximate volume (in minutes) for each of your top languages (Nepali, Spanish, Arabic, Swahili and Uzbek.)?	Here's the range of approximate volume in minutes every quarter: Spanish - 800-3500, Nepali - 900-2500, Arabic - 500-1500, Swahili - 700-1000 & Uzbek - 45-100
22	RFP Page 11, Section 2.3. states that interpreters and translators must be, "Legally authorized to work in the U.S." Is this requirement applicable to "off-site" linguists, i.e., those servicing the contract via telephone and video as well as those performing written translations?	Yes, it's required of all language service providers as per this RFP.
23	May bidders utilize off-shore interpreters and linguists for the performance of telephone and video interpreting as well as written translations?	No, unless they are legally authorized by the county.

24	Who is the incumbent and what are their current fees?	The current vendors are: Translate one (formerly Trustpoint One), Center for Hearing and Deaf Services and Language Line Solutions. Language service rates vary. Please refer to question 10.
25	When is the anticipated award date and how will vendors be notified?	The anticipated award date will be in July 2022. Vendors will be notified of the decision via email.
26	If vendors do not have any subcontracting opportunities, how do you recommend that the Good Faith forms be completed (i.e., if no subcontractors were contacted at all)?	You should describe this situation in your MWDBE documentation and request a waiver.
27	Could you please share past usage statistics broken down by service and language?	Please refer to question 15.
28	What is the name of the incumbent(s)?	The current vendors are: Translate one (formerly Trustpoint One), Center for Hearing and Deaf Services and Language Line Solutions.
29	So that the incumbent does not have an advantage over other bidders, what are the incumbent's rates?	No, the incumbents do not have an advantage over other bidders. Please refer to question 10.
30	Among the documents to be translated, are there InDesign files?	Yes, there are InDesign files.
31	Did the incumbent(s) cover every single assignment successfully?	Yes, every single assignment has been covered successfully.
32	What challenges have you faced with similar scope of work from vendors you worked with?	Some of the challenges include unavailability of some indigenous dialects and time constrains to complete an urgent assignment.
33	Is there a preference for local vendors?	No, there is no preference.

34	Can the MWDBE and VOSB subcontracted businesses be certified as such in California?	Allegheny County accepts certifications by PA UCP (https://paucp.dbesystem.com/) and by others on a case-by-case basis. Please submit the certifications, and the Allegheny County Equity and Inclusion Department (https://www.alleghenycounty.us/equity-inclusion/index.aspx) will review them to determine if they will accept them.
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Office Hours Q&A, April 6, 2022

#	Question	Response
35	Do you all know what percentage of on-demand VRI is made before or after normal business hours, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., Eastern standard?	We make every attempt to have those interactions take place during normal business hours. However, considering the nature of the work that we do, there are some things that happen outside of normal business hours.
36	For written translation, how do you define a page? For example, is it 300 to 400 words? Typically, in the industry, we function by word count. So, in order to maintain the parameters, we want to make sure that we understand what you all mean by ten pages or up to ten pages just so that we're able to fulfill that. I'm trying to know a little bit more about what's the average word count may be, instead of pages.	We go by word count.

37	<p>On page 4, if you could explain to me a little bit more about any agreements resulting from this RFP will not exceed 100,000 per year per agreement. Whomever is awarded the over-the-phone interpreting piece of it or the on-site piece of it, and that ends up being more than \$100,000 a year, how does that look, that particular segment of the request or of the business need?</p>	<p>DHS will negotiate rates and award amounts with Successful Proposers.</p>
38	<p>Do you have historical data on, especially, the over-the-phone need? In other words, the type of volume that you anticipate or that you've seen historically? And I know it's hard because with the pandemic, that changed things in regard to on-site, which probably reduced. But just in general, do you have any idea?</p>	<p>During the pandemic, most of our requests were over-the-phone. We are bound to state and federal legislation and guidance about how services are delivered. These requests shifted drastically during the pandemic to over-the-phone and online iterations. Unfortunately, it is not fully up to DHS when services go back to in-person. All we can do is our best to estimate when and if there will be a shift again. Things are changing so quickly as it relates to COVID, the pandemic and the requirements. We must follow the guidance that we receive for state and federal funders. Please refer to question 15 & 18.</p>
39	<p>What inspired the RFP? Is it a due diligence? Is it a requirement based on a period of time? Or is there any concerns with your current provider?</p>	<p>DHS noticed some trends, particularly with the last census, that the LEP population within our County has increased drastically over the years and has become a lot more diversified. We trying to be responsive to the shifts in our population trends and increase our language service capacity.</p>

40	<p>We are also interested in just getting a clearer idea of DHS’s usage of each service line, so maybe on a monthly, quarterly, or even yearly basis, about how much, usually, in minutes DHS is using over-the-phone interpreting or in-person interpreting. And we understand that, especially, with COVID, in-person interpretation usage fluctuates, and it’s hard to predict what levels will be going forward and over the last two years usage of those services has been down. But any estimation DHS can provide about their usage would really help us get an idea of the scope of the request and what you guys need. Even historical, pre-pandemic data would be helpful.</p>	<p>Please refer to question 5, 15 & 18.</p>
41	<p>Do subcontractors need to be certified as MWDBE/VOSB by the County, or can they be certified in other jurisdictions such as California?</p>	<p>Allegheny County accepts certifications by PA UCP and by others on a case-by-case basis. Please submit the certifications with your proposal, and the Allegheny County Equity and Inclusion Department will review them and determine if they will accept them. You do not need to know if the County will accept them prior to submitting your proposal. If during their review, the Equity and Inclusion Department finds errors in your MWDBE documentation, they will contact you and help you correct them.</p>

42	Are most Allegheny County DHS offices located within the City of Pittsburgh with client homes being located around the County?	No, most of the Allegheny County DHS offices are proximate to the city center, but they're not necessarily located within the City. For Language Assistance Services, we have to look at the County proper. Many offices are in other municipalities outside the City of Pittsburgh. In addition, there are instances where we would need on-site interpreters to accompany staff to client homes. And we serve the entire County, so those homes could be located anywhere in Allegheny County.
43	Is there a possibility for the deadline for submission?	It's unlikely that the submission deadline will be extended.
44	Will the recording of the office hours be posted?	No. The recording for this meeting will not be posted but rather the questions and the responses to the questions will be posted.
45	We already have a contract with DHS for Language Assistance Services. Do we need to submit a proposal to continue our contract?	No, current providers do not need to submit a proposal, unless they would like to add new Language Assistance Services to their contract that they do not currently deliver.
46	In 2016, a similar RFP was issued, and I believe there was two service providers awarded. Are they still contracted for this RFP, or is this seeking additional contracted services? So, is all of it up for renewal, or is this just a continuation to be able to provide further languages based on the demand?	DHS is trying to expand services because we have increased demand. We would like to engage new providers in addition to our current providers.

#	Question	Response
47	What mechanism or method do you use for invoicing and making payments?	An invoice is sent electronically, processed for payment and a check is mailed.
48	Would the initial award meeting and any subsequent meetings be required to be conducted in-person or can it be done remotely?	Any necessary meetings with the Successful Proposer(s) will not need to be conducted in person. They can be conducted remotely.
49	Much of the proposal would need to be submitted by filling out the RFP forms. Should there be a need to modify the format of such form in order to include all relevant terms and content, would that be acceptable?	Yes, that would be acceptable.
50	Could we modify the format of the pricing table to include all relevant terms and content? If not, how can such terms be incorporated?	Yes, a proposer could modify and incorporate any other relevant terms to the budget deemed necessary.
51	Is a list of prospective bidders for this RFP available? If so, please provide that list or its accessible location online.	No, we do not have a list of prospective bidders available.
52	Under the FOIA, is there an incumbent currently providing these services? If yes, please identify them and how long Department has been working with them?	Please see the answer to question 28. These providers have been contracted since 2017.
53	Under the FOIA, how much are you currently paying for the services?	Please see the answer to question 10.
54	Why are you considering changing vendors?	We are not changing vendors. We are adding vendors to respond to an increasing need for language assistance services.
55	What is the Department's policy concerning cancellations?	24 hours' notice of cancellation.
56	Please provide historical annual data on the service utilization, broken down by	Please see the answer to question 15.

	the type of service category and language.	
57	What are the hours/days you are expecting to need/use the interpreters?	DHS Human Services need is 24 hours and 7-days/week.
58	What are the current rates that the County is paying for onsite interpreting services?	Please refer to question 10.
59	Who are the current contract holders for each of these services?	Please refer to question 28.
60	Is the requirement for all interpreters and translators to be legally authorized to work in the U.S. or does this requirement only pertain to onsite interpretation?	Yes, the requirement is for all interpreters and translators to be legally authorized to work in the U.S.
61	Due to the size of our financial records, it would take 4 separate emails to send out. Would it be possible to provide a link to all of our reports instead, which are public information?	If the link provided will allow us to download our own copies of the documents, then yes. If it is a link to just a website page, no.
62	Do we only need to provide our proposal response in the response form or is an additional proposal required with the form?	Yes, you only need to provide the Response Form complete with your responses along with the necessary attachments and requirements.
63	We provide translation in over 380 languages. Due to the page limitation for written translation, is it possible to not count the language list or just include the most used languages and then attach a complete list as a supplemental attachment?	Yes. If listing the number of languages you translate will not fit within the page limitation, please include only your most used languages and attach a complete list of languages as a supplemental attachment.
64	In the Response Form, under the section titled "Attachments" there are a list of attachments that are required with our submission. Where in the portal is the MWDBE and VOSB documents? Is the Allegheny County Vendor Creation Form the same as the Response Form?	The required attachments are all available on our solicitations webpage under "Required documents" at https://www.alleghenycounty.us/Human-Services/Resources/Doing-Business/Solicitations-(RFP/RFQ/RFI).aspx

65	Can we provide our own W9?	Yes, you do not have to use the W-9 form provided by DHS.
66	Some of the questions under the Response Form do not allow for separation of paragraphs or the ability to create a list. Is it possible to send a new version of the form with these capabilities or can we answer outside of the “Click here to enter text” section in order to be able to format our responses?	Yes, you may answer outside the "Click here to enter text" section as long as you stay within the Response Form requirements.

April 21, 2022

#	Question	Response
67	If multiple awards are made for the same service, how will the work be apportioned?	This usually depends on availability. Staff will reach out to all agencies that provide the service needed in the timeframe needed.
68	How should services for Desktop Publishing, website localization, and A/V services as referenced in the RFP as “DHS may also require Written Translation services to support additional forms of media and informational content, including but not limited to webpages, social media, graphic design or audio recordings” be referenced as available services in the proposal documents, as the available forms and required attachments are the only accepted submission documents? Where should pricing for these services be included?	Please refer to question 50.

69	What are the expected contract dates for the winning bid?	The winning bid date is expected before the beginning of the new contract year July 1, 2022.
70	What are the Department's payment, invoicing, and billing terms (i.e., in how many days can the contractor expect the payment following the submission of an invoice)?	DHS cut checks bi-weekly so payments for any invoice that has been reviewed and approved can be expected within two weeks of submission.
71	Will the Department include a fidelity bond in the insurance requirements, as they are not currently listed?	That is not a requirement for submission. If your agency is chosen as a Successful Proposer, DHS will reach out to you if there is any further documentation we require.
72	What percentage of your Spoken and Sign language interpreting assignments are for last minute needs (less than 2 full business days' notice)?	The nature of human services needs is very unpredictable and varies.
73	Are the terms of the sample agreement negotiable?	DHS will consider all proposed costs for reasonableness and negotiate the final terms with the Successful Proposers.
74	Does "Any Agreements resulting from this RFP will not exceed \$100,000 per year per Agreement." refer to a budget of \$100,000 per service provided, per Vendor agreement that could include one or all services, or as a total for all services provided under the agreement per year? If \$100,000 is the total for all services, how would the budget be broken down per service?	Yes, the budget will be estimated per each service (ASL - \$35,000, Phone/VR-\$40,000 & Written \$30,000).
75	How many hours of onsite interpreting service (by language) has the County used in 2019, 2020 and 2021?	Please refer to question 18 & 21.
76	Can we provide a tiered rate for the per word pricing based on new and repeat text for translation services?	Yes. DHS will consider all proposed costs for reasonableness and negotiate the final terms with the Successful Proposers.

77	In order to achieve the most cost-effective pricing for the Department of Human Services it is beneficial to allow each contracted vendor to achieve economy of scale by providing additional work to existing resources. Will each contracted service be considered a separate agreement with a not to exceed the amount of 100K?	Yes, please also refer to question 74.
78	What percentage of requests were requested by language tier? Ex. Tier 1 - 80% Tier 2 - 10% Tier 3 - 6% Tier 4 - 4%	Tier 1 - Spanish, Nepali, Russian. Tier 2 - Arabic, Burmese, Swahili Tier 3 - Hindi, Farsi, Karen, French Tier 4 - all other languages.
79	Who are the existing vendors providing onsite Interpretation and what are their rates?	Please refer to questions 10 and 24.
80	Who are the existing vendors providing onsite interpretation for ASL and what are their rates?	Please refer to questions 10 and 24.
81	Who are the existing vendors providing translation services and what are their rates?	Please refer to questions 10 and 24.
82	Who are the existing vendors providing over the phone interpretation and what are their rates	Please refer to questions 10 and 24.
83	Who are the existing vendors providing VRI services and what are their rates?	Please refer to questions 10 and 24.
84	Who are the existing vendors providing ASL via VRI services and what are their rates?	Please refer to questions 10 and 24.
85	How many hours of service you are anticipating for Sign Language interpreting?	We are anticipating 60-70 hours quarterly (3,600 - 4,200 minutes).
86	Can you provide historical volume based on individual languages (i.e. Spanish versus all other languages)?	Please refer to question 21.
87	Can you provide historical and/or anticipated volume for sign language interpretation?	Please refer to question 85.
88	Can you disclose the current rates and vendors on this contract?	Please see the answer to question 10.

89	If this is a current contract, are there any issues or areas of concern you would like to see addressed?	There are no issues of concern with the current contractors. We are seeking to increase our capacity to offer language assistance services.
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April 25, 2022

#	Question	Response
90	What percentage of the contract is for Spanish written translation?	There is no percentage of the contract specifically for Spanish written translation. Please refer to questions 74, 77 and 78.
91	Will multiple vendors be selected, or is this award to a single vendor?	This will depend on the quality of the submissions, but we are seeking multiple vendors.
92	Is there an estimated budget for this specific award?	\$100,000. Please refer to question 74.
93	Are you able to provide existing vendor(s) incumbent pricing/information?	Please refer to questions 10 and 24.
94	Can you please provide the estimated breakdown of spend for Over-the Phone Interpretation (OPI), Video Remote Interpretation (VRI), and On-Site Interpretation (OSI) Services through the duration of the last contract term?	Please refer to question 15.
95	How many minutes of Over-the Phone Interpretation (OPI) Services were billed in the previous year?	Please refer to question 9.
96	How many minutes of Video Remote Interpretation (VRI) Services were billed in the previous year?	Please refer to question 15.
97	How many hours of On-Site Interpretation (OSI) Services were billed in the previous year?	Please refer to question 15.

98	What challenges do departments currently face with Over-the Phone Interpretation (OPI), Video Remote Interpretation (VRI), and On-Site Interpretation (OSI) Services?	We are anticipating an increase in request for language assistance services.
99	Will Third Party (3P) calls be required?	No, third party calls are required.
100	Will you require any custom reporting?	Yes, custom reporting is required of all our language service providers quarterly.
101	What type of advance notice will be provided for On-Site Interpretation (OSI) appointments?	Currently, 48 hours advance notice.
102	Can you please provide the estimated spend for Translation Services in previous year?	Please to refer to question 8.
103	For Translation Services are you able to provide volume breakdown by words/pages?	Every quarter an estimated number of 13,924 words are translated
104	What challenges do you currently face with Translation Services?	We are anticipating an increase in request for language assistance services.
105	What are the typical file formats for submitting translations?	Native file (office suite, InDesign, adobe illustrator).
106	Are there any specific technical requirements like file types, software or formats for submitting translations?	No, specific technical requirement.
107	Can you please provide additional information regarding required Turnaround Times for Translation Services?	The turnaround for translation services varies from document to document.
108	Will a translation memory database (TM), glossary, style guide or previously translated materials be supplied to the chosen vendor(s)?	DHS will prepare Successful Proposers with all they need to know upon selection and negotiation of contract terms.

109	<p>Allegheny County has MWDBE goals of 13% participation for Minority Business Enterprises and 2% participation for Women Business Enterprises and expects that Successful Proposers will make a “good faith effort” in assisting the County in meeting these goals" Q Does this apply to vendors in Allegheny County or Nationwide? AND – “Allegheny County also has a goal of 5% participation for veteran-owned small businesses (VOSB) in all contracts. The County, therefore, expects that Successful Proposers will make a “good faith effort” in assisting the County in meeting this goal.” Does this apply to vendors in Allegheny County or Nationwide?</p>	<p>This applies to all vendors.</p>
110	<p>Is submitting reasoning for a “good faith effort” sufficient for the above?</p>	<p>It can be. Once you submit the documentation, our Office of Equity and Inclusion will reach out to you to make sure you have completed the process and documentation correctly.</p>
111	<p>What potential penalties could apply to Vendors who do not meet the information above on pages 19 and 20?</p>	<p>The county cannot contract with firms who are not at least making a "good faith effort."</p>
112	<p>In connection with this RFP process, would the RFP terms and conditions and/or contract terms, as applicable, be deemed legally binding or will a contract negotiation ensue upon issuance of one or more awards?</p>	<p>Contracting and negotiation will begin if you are chosen as a Successful Proposer.</p>
113	<p>If legally binding, are bidders allowed to suggest changes to the RFP terms and conditions and/or contract terms, as applicable, as part of their submitted proposals</p>	<p>The RFP is not a contract.</p>