

Developing Contracts and Requesting Bids: Interpreters and Speech-to-Text Providers

Overview



Institutions frequently face a variety of challenges with providing accessible environments for deaf¹ students. One common challenge is the semester-to-semester changes in the number of registered deaf students and service provider² availability. In these circumstances, institutions often contract directly with service providers or through agencies to fulfill requests from deaf students, staff members, faculty members, and visitors. A formal agreement between the institution and service provider or agency that outlines clear expectations is recommended to ensure that quality services are arranged.

Terms and Conditions

If your institution has decided to contract with service providers or to seek services from an agency, collaborate with your purchasing department to clarify processes. Planning ahead will allow sufficient time to solicit a wide range of vendors and review their bids to determine which vendor(s) best align with your campus needs. This process should be a collaborative effort with the goal of deaf individuals receiving quality services from qualified providers.

Prior to the bidding process, consider what terms or items should be included in your request for proposals. It is important to outline all service expectations, including the following:

- Compliance with relevant institutional policies
- Funding stipulations to establish service rates and to avoid unexpected costs
- Clear process for provision of services

In addition to the required general content in your bid request, here are some considerations for terms specific to service providers.

SERVICE REQUESTED

Provide a detailed list of the specific type of services you are seeking in your bid. Examples include the following:

- American Sign Language Interpreters, Oral Interpreters, Tactile Interpreters
- Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART), C-Print, TypeWell



CONSUMERS AND SETTINGS

Postsecondary institutions may need service providers to cover a range of consumers and settings. Indicate the type of potential assignments, such as academic courses (face-to-face or online), campus events, graduations, concerts, sporting events, or residence hall meetings. Indicate whether contracted service providers would potentially work with a variety of deaf individuals, such as students, staff members, faculty members, administrators, campus visitors, and parents.



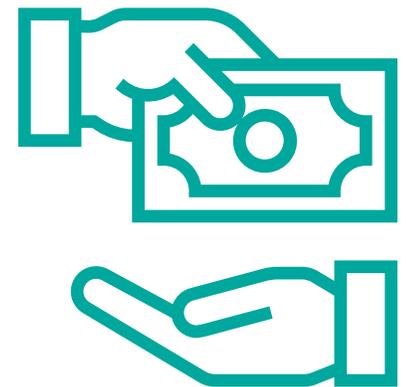
QUALIFICATIONS REQUIRED

Outline the minimum service provider qualifications, including credentials, knowledge, and experience. The minimum qualifications may depend on state laws, the institution's required certification levels for service providers, and other types of employment qualifications for service providers. Note that service providers with advanced credentials and specific experience are likely better qualified to meet a variety of needs at your institution.

- **Minimum credential levels:** List any national certification, state license, and/or other credential required.
- **Experience required:** Indicate the minimum years of experience providing services in higher education. List any specialty topics (legal, medical, technical, graduate-level, etc.) and ask whether service providers are experienced in specialized courses.
- **Business requirements:** Check your institution's contractor eligibility requirements for businesses and independent contractors. These requirements may include having appropriate business licensure, proof of insurance, or professional references from other institutions who have previously used their services.

MINIMUM HOURLY FEE

Vendors have overhead costs that are generally included in their rates; however, you may be able to negotiate a discount based on volume. In general, a two-hour minimum is standard per assignment and is a commonly accepted practice in higher education and across community, medical, and legal settings. During this two-hour block, the service provider has reserved its time for your needs and will decline other employment opportunities. In some cases, this practice may also include travel time incurred.



Hourly pay rates depend on a number of factors, including qualifications (credentials, education and training, content knowledge, experience), overhead costs built into the rate, and geographical location (higher rates based on higher costs of living). Below are some additional factors to consider including in your request for bids that affect the anticipated cost of services.

- **Rate differential.** Are there different rates for services provided during regular business hours versus nonbusiness hours or weekends? Ask about the specific times the different rates start and end.

- **Emergencies.** It is important for the institution to understand how to make emergency or last-minute requests with a contractor and whether there is a rate differential for these requests.
- **Travel Fees.** Travel fees may differ based on the location of the campus (urban, suburban, or rural), availability of parking, and availability and access to public transportation. Will travel be an additional cost based on portal-to-portal pay, mileage, or time claimed?
- **Parking fees.** Parking reimbursement, discounts, or passes should be considered when negotiating terms. A common example is a campus parking fee for surface lots or structures. If there is a campus parking fee, is the institution or vendor responsible for this cost? In this scenario, the availability and price of parking at your campus can be a significant factor in recruiting service providers. Parking can also be negotiated on a case-by-case basis.
- **Preparation time.** Service providers need to prepare in advance, especially for ongoing assignments such as academic courses. This preparation may include reading materials before an assignment, meeting with the consumer to discuss presentation content, or reviewing scripts. Terms should include whether preparation time will be built into the rates quoted or negotiated on a case-by-case basis. For example, if a two-hour minimum is charged for a one-hour event, there is room to negotiate for an hour to be used for preparation. These terms may also change with the type of course or event, such as highly technical courses, theatrical performances and concerts, deaf student presentations, and others that may need additional preparation time.
- **Specialty services.** Some circumstances may require providers with specific experience, training, knowledge, or medical, mental health, legal, or foreign language (trilingual) certification.
- **Overtime charges.** If a request goes beyond the scheduled time, how will overtime services be accounted for and billed?
- **Overnight assignments.** What are potential costs incurred for services outside of the local vicinity and for overnight requests (e.g., class field trip)? Is the institution or vendor responsible for logistical travel arrangements for overnight trips? Note: Requests for extended overnight assignments such as off-site internships or study abroad excursions may warrant a separate contract or bid.³
- **Remote services.** Remote services rates are different from on-site services. Generally, remote services incur slightly lower costs than on-site services due to less travel time. Remote services may require a minimum two-hour charge and then charge by increments (typically 15 or 30 minutes) thereafter.

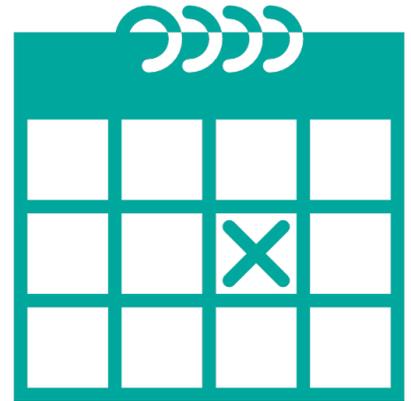
EQUIPMENT FOR SPEECH-TO-TEXT SERVICES

Identify equipment the institution will provide versus equipment the speech-to-text provider will provide. Items that are needed for classrooms or events may include the following:

- Student laptop, tablet, or other device for viewing live transcriptions
- Projector and screen
- Microphone(s)
- Cords (Ethernet, power strips)
- Laptop stands

CANCELLATION POLICIES

Cancellation by the institution. When services are scheduled with service providers, the expectation is that the time is billable unless advance notice is given. Notice minimums are commonly 24 to 48 hours in advance of assignments. The rationale behind the billable costs is that once time has been reserved, service providers can no longer accept other work during that time. Consequently, it is unlikely that the service provider will be able to fill or replace short-notice cancellations and recoup lost wages. Thus, the cancellation policy protects the provider. For assignments that are canceled upon arrival, a procedure should be outlined for the provider to notify the institution. Institutions can then negotiate with providers on potentially filling other assignments or requests on an as-needed basis (e.g., an emergency or last-minute request that the provider could cover).



Cancellation by the service provider. Procedures should be outlined regarding expectations when service providers or agencies cancel an assignment. Specify who is responsible to find a replacement service provider if the assigned individual is sick or no longer able to provide services. Often, agencies are responsible for finding substitute interpreters, whereas independent contractors may not be.

ADDITIONAL EXPECTATIONS

List any additional expectations of service providers. For example, what procedures are they required to follow when they arrive early or will be late?

METHOD AND FREQUENCY OF PAYMENT

Describe how and when the service provider or agency will receive payment for services. Some institutions process invoices on a monthly basis; others are more flexible and pay biweekly.

BID EVALUATION AND AWARD

If possible, provide information on what criteria will be considered when reviewing and selecting bids. Outline the timeline for negotiations (if applicable) and whether vendors can submit modifications or additional materials to support their proposal.

Remember: Terms of service can be negotiated!

Notes

¹ NDC uses the term “deaf” in an all-inclusive manner to include people who identify as deaf, deafblind, deafdisabled, hard of hearing, late-deafened, and hearing impaired.

² “Service provider” denotes interpreters or speech-to-text providers.

³ See “Study Abroad Planning Guide” for information about extended time and overnight agreement considerations. nationaldeafcenter.org/studyabroad