Q9438

Vendor Questions

1. How many Deaf/Hard of Hearing students need ASL interpretation services on UNI’s campus?
   One student will be utilizing ASL, but this number can change at any time.

2. Estimated, how many hours of interpretation services do you expect to use per week for students?
   Approximately 15 to 20 hours a week per student. This is a low average, previous semesters would have needed 25 to 45 hours per semester. Additionally, there are large scale events (e.g. conferences, jump start, graduation, GBPAC, and orientation) in which you would be responsible for providing interpreters. This is a multi-year contract across the entire campus.

3. How many Deaf/Hard of Hearing faculty/staff members need ASL interpretation services on UNI’s campus?
   There are no faculty who have requested ASL interpretation at this time.

4. Estimated, how many hours of interpretation services do you expect to use per week for faculty/staff?
   None at this time.

5. Who are the current service providers?
   Northeast Iowa Interpreting

6. How many hours of ASL interpretation services were provided in the last year?
   Unsure at this time. Waiting on final invoices from current vendor. Additionally, this information does not factor in other events, faculty expenses, as there is no centralized billing at this time. For students, we spend approximately 500 to 750 hours a year on interpreting.

7. Are you planning on a sole-source award or multiple award for this contract?
   Ideally a sole-source award, but if the service provider can only provide parts of the outlined requests, they would still be considered and others would also be awarded to fulfill the needed services.

8. What have been the major challenges of providing on-site ASL interpreting services at UNI?
   All major challenges have been addressed with the current contract holder. In light of the changing educational environment it is necessary to be able to provide ASL interpreting from different means (virtual and in person) in order to meet student needs.

9. How is each section of the evaluation criteria weighted in the scoring process? How is price weighted?
   Ability to provide ASL in a variety of platforms (VRI and in-person), ability to provide additional services like CART and Typewell, and familiarity with Zoom technology are all valued criteria. Price needs to be within industry standard.
10. Other than the classroom, where are communication access service accommodations being made? Some examples of this include, orientation, Study Groups, Jump Start, employment, and student group participation.

11. We strongly recommend the inclusion of Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) in the scored portion of this RFP and not as an optional service. There is a severe shortage of interpreters in the state, and there are only 2 Certified Interpreters within 30 miles of Cedar Falls. Furthermore, these 2 interpreters cover a large geographic area with a large number of needs. The needs of the area and of UNI far outweigh the limited availability of these two individuals. There isn’t, however, a shortage of qualified VRI interpreters available for the University of Northern Iowa to use. We believe including VRI into this contract can do the following:
   A. Save the State of Iowa money for smaller jobs (30-minute minimum for all VRI).
   B. Ensure all requests go filled.
   C. Last minute requests can become a reality even though Iowa has a severe shortage of providers.
   D. This is already a widely accepted accommodation for higher education institutions.

   Yes we would include VRI, as it is a highly valued and sought after service to be utilized in conjunction with in-person interpreting if possible.

16. With there only being two certified on-site interpreters available to any referral agency in the Cedar Falls area, can the RFP expand the pre-authorized travel radius to include the Des Moines/Cedar Rapids/Iowa City areas?

   Interpreters are eligible from any region, however, it is preferred that proposals have limits on billable travel distances and/or hours.

17. 3.1.3.1 implements a 24 hours cancellation policy. Can this be revised to the industry-standard 48-hour cancellation policy? With the extremely limited on-site resources available in the Cedar Falls area, giving less than the industry standard notification means those service providers rejected other work in favor of the University. Adjusting this policy will help the awarded agency recruit additional resources to the University by adopting general minimum industry practices.

   Yes, we would accept an adjustment.

18. 3.1.3.3 changes billing practices for reserved time based on an incident out of the control of the referral agency or service provider. Standard industry policy is to bill for all reserved time if not cancelled within 48 hours of the appointment start time. With the extremely limited on-site resources available in the Cedar Falls area, giving less than the industry standard notification means those service providers rejected other work in favor of the University. Adjusting this policy will help the awarded agency recruit additional resources to the University by adopting general minimum industry practices.
This is in response to need to ensure fiscal responsibility with state funds. Alternative proposals to this section will be considered.

19. 3.1.3.4 requests the awarded agency to report student absences to the University. Once three absences are recorded, the accommodation is no longer made. We request this requirement be re-examined. Our organization can comply with this requirement; however, our goal is to assist our partners in providing equivalent experiences for Deaf and hearing students alike. As an organization, we are very proactive to reducing expenses for our partners, but in our experience, placing contingencies on these services places an unequal responsibility on the Deaf population these services are designed to accommodate.

We are not saying that the accommodation is no longer made. We are seeking to pause services to understand the lack of communication from our student and ensure the services are working for the student and accommodating as outlined. This statement seeks partnership and increased communication with the agency to ensure the students success.

20. 3.1.3.5 allows for one week of compensation from the cancellation date of a student class. Industry standard for services provided to higher education requires at least 2 weeks. Can the RFP be modified to allow for that time? Adjusting this policy will help the awarded agency recruit additional resources to the University by adopting general minimum industry practices.

Students can decide at a moment’s notice to withdraw from a course. It is unclear how the additional time will help the rewarded agency recruit more resources. At this time, we are not willing to make an adjustment on this.