



Complete Language Services Request For Proposal (RFP) Guide and Sample RFP

Introduction to Voiance's Guide

Voiance's complete RFP guide will help you to compose a Language Services RFP. Along the way you will learn important topics relevant to the Language Services industry.

The guide accomplishes this task through the use of a sample RFP. This Guide combines many of the best practices of Language Services RFPs, including the outline and much of the content. As the guide progresses, explanations and further information accompany sections and questions.

A Language Services RFP for You

Many organizations utilize RFPs as standard procurement practice to ensure a fair process and equal opportunity for all potential business partners. RFPs enable clear comparisons between all potential business partners because they provide consistency in response format.

However, since creating a quality RFP requires time and a significant amount of resources, organizations sometimes purchase Language Services without an RFP.

After you have carefully considered your available resources, we encourage you to use this RFP guide as a starting point for issuing an RFP.

Issuing an RFP

Some points to consider in your process:

- **Become informed:** *Without detailed knowledge of services available, you might not ask the right kind of questions.*
- **Analyze your needs:** *What are the main pain-points in your current Language Services needs? Who will need to use the services and which process will the implementation touch?*
- **Contact providers:** *Contact service providers, ask them about their services and solicit their input to help you write the RFP.*
- **Pre-qualify:** *The more RFP responses you receive, the more your review periods will require significant time and effort. You may wish to pre-qualify your business partners and only send the RFP to those that have made a favorable impression.*
- **Determine award criteria:** *The best price might not necessarily give you the best value or lowest overall cost of ownership. Determine what is important to you and communicate this to the business partners.*

Table of contents:

After a cover page, most organizations include a table of contents. A clear presentation of the information will help your organization receive clearer responses with fewer questions. Below is a sample format for the presentation of the information: background information (Introduction), the response portion (Business Partner Questions) and additional documents relevant to the RFP (Attachments).

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I. Introduction to the RFP

A. Executive Summary

The executive summary contains your organization's background and intentions for the RFP. While it may seem like common sense when an RFP is labeled "RFP for Language Services," an executive summary allows you to provide the framework for the responses you will receive from business partners, such as Voiance. For example, even though the terms "interpretation" and "translation" are used interchangeably, each supports a specific communication function. Interpretation supports verbal communication; translation supports written communication. It sets the theme and tone of the RFP. An example executive summary would look like this:

{SampleOrganization} is selecting a preferred business partner for the procurement of language interpretation and translation services throughout {SampleOrganization}. Our objective is to select the business partner who most fully meets the requirements identified in this Request for Proposal (RFP), including a strong desire to increase {SampleOrganization}'s operating efficiency for servicing non-English callers. The selected business partner will supply Over-the-Phone Interpretation and Document Translation to our customer service center. {SampleOrganization} expects to award a contract pursuant to this RFP in accordance with the enclosed project timeframe (Section I.G).

B. Contact

Every organization has rules surrounding contact during an RFP. Depending on the rules in place, you may allow clarifying questions to be asked at any time or submitted by some a set deadline. Contact instructions could look like the sample text below:

Any questions or other inquiries from your firm concerning this RFP must be submitted by 1/10/20XX by email to Susan Sample, susan.sample@sample.com, who will be each potential Business Partner's point of contact. All questions and inquiries will be answered by {SampleOrganization} and will be shared with all bidders; oral questions will not be answered.

For details on the submission of the RFP response, see the Formatting and Submittal Guideline section (I.H).

C. Reason for RFP

Stating the reason for the RFP will better help those responding address your needs and concerns. An RFP is a start to what could be a very productive business relationship; beginning that process with uncertainty or lack of clarity could have detrimental effects later on. Additionally, this section provides a good place to describe what kind of language services are required, which will enable business partners, such as Voiance, to provide your organization with pricing information. Below is a sample reason section:

{SampleOrganization} has a large customer contact center to service new and existing customer account issues. Our current Business Partner's contract is set to expire by 6/15/20xx; we are looking for a Business Partner to help {SampleOrganization} achieve the most from language services. Our diverse customer base, as gathered from our previous 12 months of data, call at these frequencies, representing annual usage, as well as annual Translation usage by original content word count:

Over-the-Phone Interpretation Usage

Language	Minutes	Percent
Spanish	xx.xx	73.08%
Mandarin	xx.xx	3.90%
Vietnamese	xx.xx	2.85%
Korean	xx.xx	2.13%
Arabic	xx.xx	2.07%
Russian	xx.xx	2.03%
French	xx.xx	1.70%
Cantonese	xx.xx	1.42%
Brazil-Portuguese	xx.xx	1.10%
Haitian Creole	xx.xx	0.99%
Burmese	xx.xx	0.97%
Polish	xx.xx	0.93%
Somali	xx.xx	0.65%
Nepali	xx.xx	0.64%
Japanese	xx.xx	0.61%
Farsi	xx.xx	0.52%
Swahili	xx.xx	0.45%
Karen	xx.xx	0.44%
Amharic (Ethiopia)	xx.xx	0.36%
Armenian	xx.xx	0.35%
Bengali	xx.xx	0.31%
Italian	xx.xx	0.29%
Cambodian	xx.xx	0.28%

Translation Usage

Language	Minutes	Percent
Spanish	xx.xx	57.14%
Mandarin	xx.xx	7.94%
Vietnamese	xx.xx	6.35%
Korean	xx.xx	5.95%
Arabic	xx.xx	4.76%
Russian	xx.xx	4.76%
French	xx.xx	4.37%
Cantonese	xx.xx	4.76%
Brazil-Portuguese	xx.xx	3.97%

{SampleOrganization} anticipates similar results for the upcoming year, anticipating approximately 3%-5% growth in usage for both interpretation and translation.

D. Goal for the RFP

Listing your organization's stated goals will help your organization achieve those goals through the RFP. A strong listing of goals would look like this:

Through the selection of a Preferred Business Partner for language services, {SampleOrganization}'s seeks to achieve the following goals:

- Achieve high level end user satisfaction by providing world class language interpretation and translation services
- Ensure timely, efficient performance related to all aspects of language interpretation and translation
- Establish effective, streamlined procedures for administration, performance management, and on-going interface with the selected firm
- Ensure timely and consistent data management and reporting
- Achieve lowest overall total cost of ownership by partnering with a world class Business Partner

E. Evaluation Criteria

Providing potential Business Partners with evaluation criteria assists in receiving information that suits your needs. Without this section, your organization risks receiving responses in unhelpful formats or focused on the wrong information. A set of Evaluation Criteria based on a point system remains one of the most effective ways to evaluate an RFP. Find a sample Evaluation Criteria section below:

All proposals will be evaluated by {SampleOrganization} staff. {SampleOrganization} will select a Business Partner in accordance with the evaluation criteria set forth in this RFP. The evaluation of the proposals shall be within the sole judgment and discretion of {SampleOrganization}.

As a result of this RFP, {SampleOrganization} intends to award a contract to the Business Partner whose response conforms to the RFP and whose bid presents the greatest value to {SampleOrganization}, all evaluation criteria considered. The combined weight of the evaluation criteria is greater in importance than cost in determining the greatest value to {SampleOrganization}.

The Evaluation Criteria and their respective weights are as follows:

Evaluation Criteria	Description	Weight
Completeness of Responses	Responses to this RFP must be complete. Responses that do not include the proposal content requirements identified within this RFP will be considered incomplete and will receive no further consideration.	Pass /Fail
Financial Condition	Organizations in questionable or poor financial condition may be immediately disqualified from the competitive RFP process.	Pass /Fail
Business partner Questions	Evaluation of the Business Partner Questions Section (II) will play a large role in {SampleOrganization}'s final decision, in the following categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Business Partner Experience, Expertise and Value-Added Services B. Interpreter Quality Assurance Practices C. Account Management and Client Service D. Call Center Metrics E. Telephone, Data and Interpretation Technology F. Security and Compliance G. Data Reporting and Invoicing 	2.5 Points 2.5 Points 2.5 Points 5 Points 2.5 Points 2.5 Points Total: 20
References	The quality and relevance of references from organizations similar to {SampleOrganization}.	5 Points
Understanding of the RFP	Clear writing, relevant answers and a demonstrated understanding and accuracy in responses.	5 Points
Attachments	Quality and completeness of attachments.	5 Points
Overall RFP Proposal	An overall score to the RFP response, including completeness, clarity and presentation	5 Points
Price	A competitive, favorable pricing of services	5 Points
		Grand Total: 45 Points

F. Checklist for Business Partner Deliverables

You may have a well-written RFP, but without a checklist, RFP responses may lack vital documents that were not clearly stated as deliverable with the RFP. Once again, here is a look at a sample deliverables checklist:

All final RFP related deliverables are due via email by 3/15/20xx. Each final RFP response should include the following and be emailed to susan.sample@sample.com:

Business Partner Questions (One PDF or Word file)

One final version of each Business Partner's RFP response should include the following sections when emailed to susan.sample@sample.com. The file must be sent in PDF or Word (.doc or .docx) format.

- A. Business Partner Executive Summary
- B. Business Partner Experience, Expertise and Value-Added Services
- C. Business Partner Financial Condition
- D. Interpreter Quality Assurance Practices
- E. Account Management and Client Service
- F. Call Center Metrics
- G. Telephone, Data and Interpretation Technology
- H. Security and Compliance
- J. Data Reporting and Invoicing

Attachments (Each as a separate image, PDF or Word file)

Each of the following attachments must be included in an email to susan.sample@sample.com, along with the Business Partner Questions file. Some of these files will be created by the Business Partner and sent out, others are supplied within {SampleOrganization}'s RFP document and must be signed and returned.

- A. Implementation Plan
- B. Pricing
- C. Sample Invoice and Reports
- D. Interpreter Code of Ethics, Confidentiality and Non-Disclosure Agreements
- E. Languages Served
- F. Insurance Certificates
- G. ISO Certificates
- H. Other Procedural, Contractual or Legal Documents

G. Important Dates and Deadlines

Providing a summary of the important dates and deadlines will provide important organization and communication for both your organization and potential business partners. An example of a set of reasonable timelines would look something like the table below:

{SampleOrganization} anticipates the following general time frames in connection with issuance of this RFP, review and analysis of proposals, award of a contract, and implementation of the selected services:

Events	Completion Date
RFP's to business partners	
• Send RFP's	1/5/20xx
• Clarifying questions from Business Partners	2/8/20xx
• Responses to Business Partners	2/15/20xx
• Final RFP response documents due	3/15/20xx by 11:59pm EST
Evaluation of bids (RFP review)	3/15/20xx – 4/12/20xx
Supplier presentations	Week of 4/4/20xx

Finalize Business Partner selection 4/19/20xx

- Site visit to Business Partner(s)
- Team recommendation
- Approve by leadership

Contract negotiations, award & communication 4/22/20xx

Transition to new Business Partner and New contract is implemented 5/1/20xx

Following our review of proposals, {SampleOrganization} will promptly notify each Business Partner regarding our desire to conduct (or not conduct) further negotiations with their firm.

H. Formatting and Submittal Guidelines

Taking a moment to define the formatting and submittal requirements will ensure you receive an RFP formatted to readily address the needs of your organization. Formatting and submitting guidelines are important; SampleOrganization's guidelines are below:

Proposal Format

- Your RFP response must be prepared for clarity and ease of readability.
- Your RFP response content should provide concise and relevant answers, with emphasis on completeness and clarity of content.
- Proposals shall be submitted electronically only.
- Incomplete proposals or proposals that are not prepared in accordance with this RFP will be eliminated from the evaluation process.
- All potential Business Partners are required to present proposals using the same headings and categories as outlined in the RFP to ensure a fair, equitable, and timely evaluation.
- {SampleOrganization} reserves the right to reject any and all proposals submitted that fail to conform to the requirements of the RFP and to request additional information from any potential Business Partner submitting a proposal.

Proposal Submittal Guidelines

You must e-mail an electronic copy of your proposal, and any supporting documentation in Microsoft Word (.doc or.docx) or .PDF format, to Susan Sample susan.sample@sample.com.

J. Other Rules, Regulations and Restrictions for RFP (disclaimers, contract award, etc)

Many organizations have rules specific to their RFP process. This will vary from company to company, but below are some common sections that your organization may consider using:

Contracts

{SampleOrganization} has attached standard terms and conditions for all RFP participants for review; you must accept these or offer full details of changes you would like {SampleOrganization} to consider, otherwise your proposal will be disqualified.

Disclaimers

You are hereby advised that {SampleOrganization} is not committed to any course of action as a result of its issuance of this Request for Proposal and/or its receipt of a proposal from you or other firms in response to it. In particular, you should note that {SampleOrganization} may:

- Reject any proposal which does not conform to instructions and specifications which are issued herein
- Not accept proposals after the stated submission deadline
- Reject all proposals, if it so decides
- Award a contract in connection with this RFP at any time
- Make no award of a contract

You are also advised that {SampleOrganization} will not reimburse your firm for any proposal preparation costs or other work performed in connection with this RFP, whether or not your firm is awarded a contract.

II. Business Partner Questions

A. Business Partner Executive Summary

This section should be for the Business Partner to summarize its intentions and differentiating qualities. It should set the tone of the RFP response.

B. Business Partner Overview and Financial Condition

An excellent business partner does not have poor financials. While some providers may be able to provide low-cost solutions, always check to make sure they have outstanding financials and would be able to continue servicing your organization even in hardship. Often, RFP issuers ask for at least one of the following:

1. Please provide Business Partner's past two years of revenue
2. Please provide Business Partner's most recent Dunn and Bradstreet report
3. How many employees do you have? How many directly provide language services?
4. What kind of quality processes have you implemented? Is your organization ISO Certified?
5. Please provide 3 references from organizations similar in scope to {SampleOrganization}.

C. Interpreter Quality Assurance Practices

The methodologies behind interpreter recruitment, training and monitoring can have drastic effects on your organization's language service efficiency and customer satisfaction. Ask tough questions like:

1. Where are your interpreters located?
2. Are your interpreters employee or contract interpreters?
3. Will any of this business be sub-contracted to another company? If so, what percentage (including languages) will be sub-contracted? Are these sub-contractors based in the US? If not, where?
4. Will any interpretation calls be routed outside the country?
5. How are your interpreters recruited?
6. How are your interpreters trained?
7. What kind of on-the-job training, shadowing or side-by-side assistance do your interpreters receive?
8. What are your interpreters' post-training activities?
9. What are your interpreter quality monitoring processes?
10. How often do interpreters receive ongoing quality monitoring?
11. What are the consequences for outstanding or poor interpretation performance?
12. How familiar are your interpreters with the types of calls {SampleOrganization} receives?
13. What differentiates your organization's interpreters from other providers?

D. Implementation and Training

1. How will you ensure a smooth transition?
2. What is your process for implementation?
3. How will you train our representatives on the use of your system?
4. What kind of support material is available?
5. What kind of value added services can your organization provide at no additional charge?

E. Account Management and Client Service

The way your account is managed can create adversarial situations and lack of service or full-fledged partnership and attentiveness. Make sure to inquire how the Business Partner intends to work with you; it will provide distinct insight into the potential Business Partner's culture. Ask questions like the following:

1. Who will manage {SampleOrganization}'s account?
2. What kind of regular contact will you maintain with our organization?
3. How will your organization enhance {SampleOrganization}'s use of language services through account management?
4. How can your client services be contacted?
5. What proactive measures does your organization undertake to provide outstanding client service?
6. What are your procedures for customer complaints or commendations?

7. How will you review the success of your services?
8. What white papers or resources demonstrate leadership of your organization in the language services industry?

F. Contact Center Metrics

Metrics are the bottom line measure when it comes to efficiency in language services. An organization's listed price does not cover the hidden costs associated with metrics. Underperforming metrics may create increased costs through inefficiencies, including: higher wait times, more abandoned calls and language selection confusion. Challenging questions about call center metrics include:

1. What kind of contact center metrics does your organization regularly report?
2. How are these metrics measured?
3. How will these metrics add to {SampleOrganization}'s overall efficiency?
4. How does your organization achieve these metrics? What processes does your organization have in place to ensure metrics are met on a consistent basis, even in the event of unexpected surges in call volumes?
5. What kind of reduction in Average Handle Time can your organization help {SampleOrganization} to achieve?
6. What is your company's Average Speed of Answer (ASA) for both Spanish and all languages

G. Telephone, Data and Interpretation Technology

Technology and infrastructure directly affect a Language Service Provider's ability to serve your organization efficiently. Lacking the proper technologies can result in downtime, unavailability or poor call quality. When asking about technology, ask the following questions:

1. What is the nature of your organization's communication system?
2. Where are your call centers and all other parts of your communication system located?
3. What is the percentage of uptime your system has had in the past 12 months?
4. How many actual minutes of downtime did your communications system experience in the past 12 months and how did it impact service delivery?
5. What level of redundancy is employed in your organization's infrastructure?
6. How does your organization maintain services in the event of a power outage or natural disaster? What if this scenario lasts for several days?
7. What technologies are employed to ensure excellent audio quality?
8. What technologies are utilized in your interpreter call centers to increase the quality, efficiency or effectiveness of language service delivery?
9. How do your organization's investments in technology add value to {SampleOrganization}?

H. Security and Compliance

In a competitive and regulatory environment, security and compliance are of the utmost importance. Below are some relevant questions on these topics:

1. What efforts does your organization undertake to ensure the security of your facilities?
2. What security measures protect {SampleOrganization} and our end-users' information?
3. What federal laws and other agreements are your interpreters required to be in compliance?

I. Data Reporting and Invoicing

Reporting and data can provide the strongest means for changing, improving or predicting trends in your organization's language services. Whether it is due to a natural disaster, gradual demographic changes in your customer base or the results of multicultural marketing campaigns, changes in language services will occur. Strong reporting capabilities will help your organization be prepared and capitalize on these changes. For some sample questions on reporting, see the following questions:

1. What kind of online reporting does your organization provide, including what is viewable in reports?
2. What features are supported in your organization's online reporting?
3. When do invoices become available online, once they are processed?
4. How many users may access online reporting data?
5. How do reports add value to my organization?
6. What kind of training, instruction or guidance is available for utilizing reporting effectively?
7. Does your organization regularly provide custom reports and can {SampleOrganization} expect this from your organization?

J. Pricing

1. What is your pricing model? How do you charge for interpretation minutes?
2. What other are all the other possible fees our organization may encounter and under what circumstances?
3. What kind of discounts are you prepared to offer?

III. Attachments

A. Implementation Plan

Request that a Business Partner include a sample implementation plan, including their proposed process for optimizing call flow, examining reporting requirements, and all parts of your interactions leading up to and following the implementation date.

B. Pricing

With your organization's historical usage data (volume and language mix), a provider can provide a formal pricing offer, including any additional costs or discounts. Instruct them to send a pricing attachment that outlines all costs associated with their service, including any additional costs outside of price per minute of language services.

C. Sample Invoices and Reports

Ask business partners to include samples of their invoices and reports. This will help you to have an idea of what to expect from their reports. Be sure to specify that business partners attach pictures of reports that allow you to sort, filter and otherwise manipulate data, not just a picture of a PowerPoint slide. Obtaining a real view of their reports and not a concept mock-up of a report will better inform your decision.

D. Interpreter Code of Ethics, Confidentiality and Non-Disclosure Agreements

Any leading Language Service Provider will have these documents. Your organization will need to examine the documents before starting an official business relationship in any capacity. An RFP response provides a good opportunity to gain insight into Business Partners' internal values and standards. .

E. Languages Served

Ask for the Business Partner's languages served, or language list. This will enable you to match up their list of served languages to yours. This will offer you the chance to make sure that a Business Partner can meet your individual language needs before entering an official business relationship.

F. Organizational Charts

Request an organizational chart with names and titles to give your organization a look into the structure of the Business Partner. Organizational charts can be used to evaluate the Business Partner and know who the individuals are that work in the business unit that directly or indirectly interact with your account.

G. Insurance Certificates

Any organization you partner with will need to prove that they have the appropriate levels of insurance in place to support the business or meet your organization's risk requirements. Request these as an attachment.

H. ISO Certificates

ISO is an international organization that certifies quality processes for other organizations. If a Business Provider claims to be ISO certified, request proof.

I. Other Procedural, Contractual or Legal Documents

Your organization may have other forms, agreements or standard documents that all Business Partners must sign and return. Place these at the end of your RFP document and request that Business Partners return them to you as an attachment. These will vary from organization to organization.