**PUC RFP 2019-1 CTRS**

**Questions and Answers**

**April 16, 2019**

**Question 1**

RFP page 15, Section III-1.A.2 requires that each potential contractor certify that it and its affiliates, suppliers, and subcontractors to be involved in the provision of CTRS meet or exceed the requirements set forth in Appendix E – Certification Relative to Business Continuity.  Exhibit E of the RFP is the SDB/SB Participation Submittal Form and SDB/SB Letter of Intent.  Will the Commission please clarify?

**Answer:** This reference to “Appendix E – Certification Relative to Business Continuity” was included by inadvertence. This is not part of the RFP and should be ignored.

**Question 2**

RFP pages 15-17, Sections III-1.A.3, 6, and 17 refer to Appendix D for the applicable service level agreement (SLA).  However, Appendix D is the Trade Secret Confidential Proprietary Information Notice Form.  Will the Commission please clarify?

**Answer:**  This reference to “Appendix D for the applicable service level agreement (SLA)” was included by inadvertence. This is not part of the RFP and should be ignored.

**Question 3**

Non-Compensable Minutes

* 1. RFP page 16, Section III-1.A.6 requires that “Minutes spent talking with supervisors are not compensable as CTRS minutes even if CTRS services are required to handle the communication.”
  2. RFP page 18, Section III.1-A.21 requires that “Minutes spent talking with this point of contact and in escalation activities are not compensable as CTRS minutes even if CTRS services are required to handle the communication.”
  3. RFP page 18, Section III.1-A.22 requires that “CTRS minutes spent talking/communicating with a user or potential user in accessing such information are not compensable as CTRS minutes even if CTRS services are required to handle the communication.”

In the 2012 RFP process the Commission was asked to remove these requirements as, to the best of our knowledge, the technology to separate call minutes is not available.  The Commission responded with:

“For clarification, the Communication Assistant should not place parties on hold while they converse with their supervisor.  However, calls made directly to discuss issues such as a complaint is compensable.”

Will the Commission please confirm that the 2012 clarification response to these sections is still valid?

**Answer:**  Yes, the 2012 clarification response to these sections is still valid.

**Question 4**

RFP page 17, Section III-1.A.16 requires the Proposers to provide billing information for toll calls and details on how calls will be routed and billed if the originating caller does not have a specified preferred carrier of choice.

In light of the August 24, 2016 FCC waiver of the Equal Access and Billing Options Requirements, will the Commission please amend the above section to include the following language:

“OR

If the bidder is electing to offer free long distance to relay users, as allowed by the August 24, 2016 FCC waiver of the Equal Access and Billing Options Requirements, the bidder shall describe its procedures for satisfying this requirement.”

**Answer:** Yes.

**Question 5**

RFP page 20, Section III-1.D.3 requires Proposers to “Provide CTRS access in high traffic or public access areas such as airports, shopping malls, and other areas where public telephones are located.  Proposers shall explain how they would accomplish this.”

In the 2012 RFP process the Commission was asked to consider removing this requirement as today’s technology does not allow for CTRS access on pay phones.  The Commission responded with:

“The bidder should add the provision that should the technology become available, vendor will consider this aspect.”

Will the Commission please confirm that the 2012 clarification response to this section is still valid?

**Answer:** Yes.

**Question 6**

RFP page 25, Section III-1.L.9 states that the contractor should be able to separate its capital investment, revenues, and operational costs and expenses for its Commonwealth-specific CTRS operations.  Because this process is a competitive bid process and costs are not tracked in this manner, we are not able to provide state specific costs and revenue.  Therefore, will the Commission please remove this requirement as it is not applicable to a competitive bid process?

**Answer:** Yes.

**Question 7**

RFP page 27, Section IV – Cost Submittal requires Proposers to provide a cost submittal on a charge-per-minute basis.  Will the Commission allow Proposers to also provide an optional charge-per-minute plus a monthly flat rate for Outreach as is done in the current contract?

**Answer:** Yes.

**Question 8**

Will the PA PUC consider extending the due date to Friday, May 10? This will enable the Vendor adequate time to provide a comprehensive, competitive, and quality proposal for the Pennsylvania Captioned Telephone Service. This will also provide the Vendor with adequate time to review missing files (Appendix C, Appendix D, and Appendix E) and other requirements.

**Answer:** Yes. ***The Deadline to submit Proposals is now Friday May 10, 2019*.**

**Question 9**

**Section I-11. Proposal Requirements 3. a.** references Appendix F. Did the PA PUC mean to reference Appendix E. “Small Diverse Business (SDB) and Small Business (SB) Participation Submittal” or another file?

**Answer:** Yes, Appendix E. “Small Diverse Business (SDB) and Small Business (SB) Participation Submittal”.

**Question 10**

**Appendix F – Model Form of Small Diverse and Small Business Subcontractor Agreement.** Will the PA PUC clarify whether Appendix F is only a suggestive format for a Contractor to use in establishing a contract with an SDB/SB Contractor in response to this RFP and not an actual contract Contractor and its SDB/SB will need to execute and forward to the PA PUC?

**Answer:** Yes, it is only a suggestive format, but the essential aspects should be reflected in any SDB/SB subcontract.

**Question 11**

**I.15 Prime Contractor Responsibilities – The selected Proposer shall perform at least 50% of the total contract value; that is, no more than 49.9% of the work may be subcontracted.** Due to the nature of Captioned Telephone service, a subcontractor may perform more than 49.9% of the work. Would the PA PUC consider removing this requirement? The vendor will assume performance and contractual responsibility for the subcontractor.

**Answer:** Yes, the requirement is removed if and only if the Vendor will assume performance and contractual responsibility for the subcontractor. Any such violation of this requirement may not be used as a subterfuge to allow an SDB/SB to artificially become the primary contractor to “game” the BDISBO scoring system.

**Question 12**

**Any subcontract between the Contractor and any subcontractor working on this project shall contain all of the provisions of this Contract**. Would the PA PUC consider removing this requirement? The Vendor will assume performance and contractual responsibility for the subcontractor.

**Answer:** Yes, the requirement is removed if and only if the Vendor will assume performance and contractual responsibility for the subcontractor.

**Question 13**

**III-1 A-5. Allow CTRS users to place all network call types supported by TRS which would, e.g., include time division multiplexing or TDM-based calls as well as Internet Protocol or IP-based calls.** IP Protocol/IP-based calls are not currently under the PA PUC’s jurisdiction. Would the PA PUC consider removing the “Internet Protocol or IP-based” part of the requirement?

**Answer:** Yes, the “Internet Protocol or IP-based” part of the requirement is removed.

**Question 14**

**III-1 A-6. Make available to users the opportunity to speak with a Communication Assistant’s (CA) supervisor in the event of an issue with service.** Unlike TRS, the users and the CA are unable to interact with each other. Would the PA PUC consider removing this requirement?

**Answer:** Yes, the requirement is removed.

**Question 15**

**III-1 A-7. Provide a single toll-free access telephone number for CTRS users. All calling party calls to the call center shall be toll-free.** The CTRS vendor services the PA PUC through four toll free numbers, although only two are publicly available and dialed by voice-in callers. The other numbers are transparent to users when outdialing from their CapTel phone. Would the PA PUC consider removing this requirement?

**Answer:** Yes, the requirement is removed.

**Question 16**

**III-1 A-16. Provide appropriate billing information for toll/interexchange (IXC) calls to appropriate billing entities. Route toll/IXC calls to and from users via the originating party’s preferred carrier of choice.**  Will the PA PUC modify language recognizing the FCC waiver concerning Carrier of Choice and Billing which will remove Carrier and Billing requirements as stated from the RFP?

**Answer:** Yes.

**Question 17**

**III-1 A-19. Maintain an average speed of answer of ten (10) seconds or less for 85% of the calls on a daily basis. Provide sufficient call center capacity such that abandoned or lost calls do not exceed two (2) percent of total call volume. These standards apply separately to calls in queue for party-to-party calls and to calls in queue for a supervisor. Two-line calls and single-line calls should be measured separately unless they are in the same queue.** In order for the Vendor to offer a more competitive price per minute, would the PA PUC consider revising these requirements to the FCC compliant standard that 85% of all calls are answered in 10 seconds or less on a daily basis?

**Answer:** Yes, requirement is revised to the FCC compliant standard.

**Question 18**

**III-1. H. Seamless Service Transition from One Contract to Another, if Applicable.**

**Total session MOUs averaged about 84,500 during the 2018 calendar year.**

Will the PA PUC please provide the traffic data by month for the most recent 12 months, including:

1. The number of Intrastate session minutes?
2. The number of interstate session minutes?
3. What is the current reimbursement rate for CTRS?

**Answer:** Yes.

1. The number of Intrastate session minutes? Average 68,000 per month
2. The number of interstate session minutes? Average 16,500 per month
3. What is the current reimbursement rate for CTRS? Intrastate MOU rate Confidential

**Question 19**

**Part IV – Cost Submittal.** Will the PA PUC allow the Vendor to offer alternate pricing? In addition to price-per-minute, could the Vendor offer a Monthly Recurring Charge (MRC) option to cover fixed costs?

**Answer:** No, because doing so would make comparison of pricing between vendors unclear. The only optional rate allowed is a charge-per-minute plus a monthly flat rate for Outreach.

**Question 20**

Would the PA PUC please provide the following files (References highlighted in yellow):

1. Appendix C – Outsourcing Programs Using 800 Service
2. Appendix D – Service Level Agreements
3. Appendix E – Certification Relative to Business Continuity

Appendix C

1. Provide a single toll-free access telephone number for CTRS users.  All calling party calls to the call center shall be toll-free.  *See* Appendix C – *Outsourcing Programs Using 800 Service* for information on opting into the Commonwealth’s 800 Service contract.  While CTRS is not an outsourced application, the contractor may be able to participate in the Commonwealth’s 800 Service contract.  Such participation is voluntary on the part of the contractor and the 800 Service provider.

Appendix D

III-1.     Work Plan.  Indicate your work plan to provide CTRS for Pennsylvania.

1. Minimum Standards.  The proposal should provide details as to the methods of meeting the following minimum CTRS standards:
   1. Provide CTRS 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year.  Explain how service will be maintained during scheduled and unscheduled maintenance periods, network and power outages, and outages otherwise attributed to acts of God.  *See* Appendix D for the applicable service level agreement (SLA).
2. Comply with P.01 Telephone Relay Service (TRS) industry standards.  Traffic Reports indicating CCS (hundred call seconds) loads and grade of service on all CTRS trunks are due to the Commission by the 15th day of each month for the previous month’s traffic.  *See* Appendix D for the applicable SLA.
3. Make available to users the opportunity to speak with a Communication Assistant’s (CA) supervisor in the event of an issue with service.  Supervisors should be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year for such matters.  Minutes spent talking with supervisors are not compensable as CTRS minutes even if CTRS services are required to handle the communication.  *See* Appendix D for the applicable SLA.
4. Respond to complaints and service, network, or equipment inquiries from users and/or the Commission in a timely and professional, responsive manner.  Provide and maintain contact information for handling and escalating complaints and service, network, or equipment inquires.  Any situation that has caused or will cause complaints from more than five (5) users or that has or will last more than five (5) hours in duration shall be brought to the Commission’s attention and to all affected users’ attention as soon as it is realized that the situation has met or will meet these parameters.  Periodic status reports, an all-clear report, and a subsequent root-cause analysis will be required as specified by the Commission in accordance with the nature of the situations as they arise.  Each failure to provide any of the requisite notices or reports will be a separate breach of the contract.  *See* Appendix D for the applicable SLA.

Appendix E

* 1. Develop and describe contingency plans for maintaining 24/7/365 operational status.  Each potential contractor shall certify that it and its affiliates, suppliers, and subcontractors to be involved in the provision of CTRS meet or exceed the requirements set forth in Appendix E – Certification Relative to Business Continuity.  This certification shall be renewed annually by the contractor.  *See* Appendix E for the requisite initial and annual certification form.  The requirement of 24/7/365 operation applies at all times and specifically during impairment of contractor’s service or of underlying supplier’s service regardless of whether the subcontractor is intrinsically involved in the CTRS service (e.g., third-party call center, trunk lines, etc.) or is providing other goods or services (e.g., power, manpower, etc.), including but not limited to:

**Answer:** Appendix C – Outsourcing Programs Using 800 Service; Appendix D for the applicable service level agreement (SLA); and Appendix E – Certification Relative to Business Continuity, all were included by inadvertence. They are not part of the RFP and should be ignored.