



Five Tips for Procuring and Providing Sign Language Interpreting Services

1. **Agency Level Contracting Officer is in place** to oversee the contract and services.
 - a. Low price alone is NOT the preferred approach to evaluating task orders. Federal regulations direct us to seek the “Best Value for Government”.
 - i. “Best value” means the expected outcome of an acquisition that, in the Government’s estimation, provides the greatest overall benefit in response to the requirement, **both price and vendor capability** considered.
2. **Task Order is developed** with requirements that meet employee and Agency specific needs.
 - a. Clarification of Key Terms
 - i. Preference: - Deaf employees refer to individual interpreting needs as “preferences.” However the procurement community uses the term, “minimum requirements” or “needs.”
 1. Procurement officials should interpret a “preference” as a necessity.
 2. Deaf employees are encouraged to use the term “requirements” when defining needs to ensure their needs are clear and justified.
 - ii. Examples of “Preferences”
 1. Colors of clothing are important to contrast hands for visibility.
 2. Matching genders is important; interpreters are literally the voice of the person and express much more than simple words. Therefore, gender may be an important factor.
 3. Consistent use of the same pool of interpreters is integral in maintaining effective communication. Each workplace uses specific terminology, acronyms, and key contact names. Developing a familiarity of these terms and specific signs takes time for the interpreting. Once this specialty is established, it better enables quality services to deaf employees, the manager, and the work groups.
3. **Funding Source and Payment Procedures Established**
 - a. Agencies must have a funding source in place that can be modified as the interpreting needs fluctuate. While many meetings, trainings, and events may be scheduled with advanced notice, additional needs for interpreting services will vary based on individual employee work demands.
 - b. Payment procedures must be established to verify services are rendered, are effective, and meet Task Order requirements.

4. **Procedures to Request and Schedule Interpreting Services** - Individual employees are permitted to request and schedule their own services as needed directly with the vendor(s).
 - a. Contract regulations require oversight by a contracting officer to maintain integrity of the contract, including quality assurance and validation of services provided prior to payment.
 - b. To help maintain and manage funding, Agencies may require employees to seek prior approval from the Agency Contracting Officer for longer term requests such as eight hour or multi-day training requests.

5. **Quality Assurance Procedures**
 - a. Contracting Officers must communicate regularly with deaf employees to solicit feedback on the vendor and interpreters' performance.
 - i. Examples include a completed customer feedback form or a brief email describing the positive and/or negative services.
 - b. Contracting Officers must communicate feedback directly to the servicing vendor as soon as possible to help provide quality assurance.