TIPS ON HIRING THE RIGHT TELEPHONIC INTERPRETATION VENDOR

STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3	STEP 4	STEP 5
IDENTIFY YOUR LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS	**ISSUE A REQUEST FOR QUOTATION (RFQ) REFLECTING LANGUAGE AND AGENCY-SPECIFIC NEEDS**	**REQUIRE WRITTEN PROPOSALS AND EVALUATE THEM PRIOR TO LIVE TESTING**	**CONDUCT A LIVE TEST TO EVALUATE HOW POTENTIAL VENDORS PERFORM DURING AGENCY-SPECIFIC HYPOTHETICAL EXERCISES**	**SELECT A VENDOR BASED ON BOTH THE WRITTEN PROPOSAL AND HOW THE VENDOR PERFORMED DURING THE LIVE TEST**
Consider your language needs; project interpreter usage in minutes; develop a list of likely encountered target languages. Using this information, bargain for the level of services that best match agency need.	Solicit bids for services from state, local, or regional vendors. For federal agencies, see the GSA's Language Services Schedule (Schedule 738 II). Require quality control plans, cost and availability schedules, staff training, regular vendor reporting, and detailed guidance on interpreter qualifications.	Assessing vendor quality is an essential component to hiring the right vendor. Requiring written proposals allow agencies to focus in on quality concerns prior to live testing, and to narrow the field when written proposals fail to meet agency requirements.	Live testing is essential to assessing vendor quality. Live testing demonstrates the quality, logistics, and suitability of vendors. Involve known language professionals in the live testing process, and craft effective agency-specific hypothetical scenarios to test vendors.	Consider written proposals, live testing, and prior agency experience with vendors in making a selection. Narrow the field by comparing live testing results. Prioritize merit over price whenever possible.

COMMON ERRORS IN TELEPHONIC INTERPRETATION

BEWARE
WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR DURING LIVE TESTING:

- Inaccurate or inconsistent systems to accurately identify the language spoken by the LEP individual
- Unreasonably long wait times
- Unavailable languages (don't only test for Spanish)
- Interpretation errors and inaccuracies
- Failure to convey the substance and tone of the entire conversation in English or the non-English language
- Use of old, outdated, or archaic terminology
- Lack of skill in the target language
- Inappropriate conversations with LEP individuals or intervening in the conversation

VENDOR SEARCH REMINDERS

ENSURING VENDOR CAPABILITIES

- Require vendors to discuss how they identify languages
- Require vendors to commit to specific connection times and on-demand services, if necessary
- Require vendors to explain their system for quality control and/or quality assurance
- Require specific interpreter qualifications (e.g., certification, formal assessment, experience)
- Require vendors to provide clear training materials for agency staff and periodic reports on usage, by language and by office
- Require vendors to submit past performance reviews from other local, state, or federal agencies
- Require intermittent testing throughout the contract period