

INVITATION TO BID - LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY TELEPHONE MESSAGE SERVICE

Please submit your bid in accordance with the instructions. Please use this invitation to submit your bid and attach supplementary pages as necessary. One copy of your bid must be submitted to the Legislative Council office by 2:00 p.m. on Wednesday, November 8, 2000. If your bid is accepted, your bid constitutes a binding contract and includes the specifications of this invitation to bid.

BACKGROUND

Since 1985, the Legislative Assembly has provided toll-free incoming wide area telephone service (WATS) lines for North Dakota residents to obtain information about pending legislative proposals and to leave messages for their senators and representatives. The message center (telephone room) has been staffed by telephone attendants who provide information to callers on legislative proposals and take messages for legislators. In addition, materials faxed to the Legislative Assembly are received in the telephone room, are sorted, and are delivered to the appropriate individuals in the legislative chambers. Telephone calls are rotated to an available attendant or to the next available attendant on a basis that attempts to equalize the calls received by each attendant. Rather than a busy signal if all attendants are busy with calls, voice mail instruction gives the caller an option to wait until the next available attendant or to leave a voice mail message. Calls received after hours are routed to voice mail, and these messages are handled the next business day by the first attendant on duty.

Telephone attendants usually receive two types of calls--either seeking information or leaving a message. If a caller asks for information on whether a bill on a particular subject has been introduced or on the status of a specific bill, the telephone attendant accesses the computerized bill status system through the personal computer of that attendant and either uses the subject index to review the subject matter of bills introduced or accesses the bill by number to determine the current status of that proposal. The attendant then gives the information to the caller. If the caller asks to leave a message for a legislator (by policy a caller may leave a message only for that caller's senator and two representatives of the district in which that caller resides), the attendant determines who the caller's legislators are (if the caller does not know), accesses the computerized message system (LAWS), and enters the caller's name, address, telephone number, e-mail address, the specific bill number for the message, and the message. The legislator then receives this information on the legislator's personal computer. If a message is for a

legislator who does not use a personal computer, the telephone attendant completes a message form and a telephone page delivers the message to the legislator. During the 1999 session, 133 of the 147 legislators used personal computers.

Since 1993, telephone call statistics indicate the number of calls has gone down each session--62,320 calls were received in 1993; 41,668 in 1995; 28,433 in 1997; and 22,491 in 1999. In 1999, 5,106 calls were received in January; 8,813 in February; 6,594 in March; and 1,978 in April. These statistics include 1,302 voice mail messages in February; 521 in March; and 67 in April (voice mail service was not available in January). It is unknown whether the number of calls will continue to decrease each session. Factors that may influence the number of calls include increased use of e-mail to contact legislators, increased use of information available from the legislative branch web site, and the extent of public interest in legislative issues.

The fax machine for the Legislative Assembly is located in the telephone room and the telephone room personnel sort fax messages and deliver them to legislators as appropriate. During the 1999 session, 829 fax messages were received in January; 1,367 in February; 2,515 in March; and 303 in April.

During the 1999 session, the Legislative Assembly employed eight telephone attendants, two telephone pages, and a chief telephone attendant (at a total salary and Social Security cost of \$57,169.69 for 71 days). Because of the declining number of telephone messages, the Legislative Assembly will either employ eight telephone attendants and a supervisor or will contract with the bidder for this service during the 2001 legislative session. Rather than two designated telephone pages, telephone attendants can be scheduled to deliver messages or faxes to legislators. The 1999 salary and Social Security cost for these nine employees would have been \$46,861.12.

GENERAL SPECIFICATIONS

The successful bidder must provide personnel necessary to perform telephone message services required by the House of Representatives and the Senate of the 57th Legislative Assembly similar to those provided during the 1999 session. The period of the contract is from the first day of the 2001 regular session (January 9, 2001) through the last day of the legislative session (unknown, but probably in mid-April). The Legislative Assembly meets in session Monday through Friday, with the possibility of meeting in session on a few Saturdays. The Legislative Assembly may be in session on Martin Luther King, Jr., Day, Presidents' Day, and Good Friday. The

Legislative Assembly is scheduled for a recess on February 26-27, 2001. The Legislative Assembly is responsible for paying any overtime required under state or federal law if the Legislative Assembly meets on a Saturday or Sunday. Otherwise, the contractor is responsible for overtime required to answer calls, deliver messages, and deliver faxes on a timely basis.

Telephone message service employees will be located in a room to the east of the Senate chamber. Equipment and supplies will be provided by the Legislative Assembly. Each telephone attendant will have a personal computer and a telephone.

Telephone attendants will be required to answer calls, operate personal computers, access programs to obtain bill status information or transmit messages to legislators, and personally deliver telephone messages or faxes to legislators.

The contractor, through the onsite supervisor, is accountable to the Chief Clerk of the House with respect to messages for representatives and is accountable to the Secretary of the Senate with respect to messages for senators.

Employees of the contractor will be working with confidential information and are required to sign a nondisclosure agreement. The contractor must enforce this agreement and terminate an employee who violates the nondisclosure agreement.

The contractor must provide:

1. All recruiting and testing to ensure employees will possess high-quality skills and workmanship.
2. A signed nondisclosure form from each employee.
3. Continuous monitoring of the performance of employees and provide a replacement if a current employee does not perform as required.
4. Payroll services for its employees and maintenance of all required payroll records, including necessary employee forms, taxes, Social Security, and workers' compensation.

The contractor is responsible for the discipline or the dismissal of any employee. The chairmen of the House and Senate Employment Committees may discuss with the contractor the discipline or dismissal of any employee.

The contractor must designate one of its employees as the onsite supervisor. The supervisor is to supervise all employees of the contractor and provide for flexible work schedules. The supervisor must designate an assistant to assign work when the supervisor is not at work. Telephone message service should be provided between the hours of 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. on each legislative day.

The staff employed to provide this contractual service must:

1. Be able to operate a personal computer, telephone, and fax machine.
2. Possess proficiency in handling telephone messages after attending three hours of training provided by the Legislative Council. The Legislative Assembly will reimburse the contractor at the hourly rate the contractor pays the employee for the length of the training.
3. Be able to hear telephone callers in a room containing several other telephone attendants answering calls.
4. Be proficient and diplomatic in responding to telephone callers.
5. Be proficient in the English language.
6. Be able to go to a legislator's desk in the chamber and deliver messages.

Your proposal must be accompanied by a list of similar projects you have handled and a list of no fewer than three references who can attest to your capability to handle a contract of this magnitude.

This contract can be amended only by a written modification signed by both parties to the contract.

BID SPECIFICATIONS

Bids are requested based on the general specifications outlined above. For purposes of this proposal, a legislative day is a day when the Legislative Assembly is in session.

Bid proposal: Nine employees for approximately 70 legislative days (amount per day) \$ _____

What arrangements will be made to adjust the daily contract amount if fewer or more employees are needed to adequately perform the work:

If the Legislative Assembly meets for more than 70 legislative days, each additional day of telephone message service beyond 70 days will be provided for (amount per day) \$ _____

Bidder _____

Mailing address _____

Telephone _____

Signature _____

Date _____