

Ten Recommendations for Selecting Quality

Translation and Interpreting Service Providers



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Attachment 1: Template for Tender Documentation

http://acta-cz.org/jak_na_vyberove_rizeni/Priloha_1-en.xlsx

Attachment 2: Template for Replies to Tender Documentation

http://acta-cz.org/jak_na_vyberove_rizeni/Priloha_2-en.xlsx

How to Procure Translation and Interpreting Services

Are you in charge of selecting translation and interpreting service vendors?

If this is the case, this handbook will answer the common questions associated with this procedure.

Not only will you gain a basic understanding of this topic, but you will also learn about the technological solutions available and the requirements defined in the ISO 17100 – the translation services standard. You will learn about the internationally proven best practices in organizing the procurement of translation services.

With these 10 recommendations, you will be able to effectively run a tender procedure and avoid wasting resources. Wasting resources occurs most often when it is necessary to cancel a tender procedure or when dealing with complications caused by low-quality vendors.

In the handbook, you will find practical templates and useful tips to improve your interaction with selected vendors, which will save you time and trouble.



Association of Czech Translation Agencies

Translation Services

Translation - rendering the meaning of the source language content into the target language in written form, without changing it. This includes revisions of a translated text by another translator, which is a necessary part of good-quality translation services.

Revision - bilingual review of the translated text compared to the source language content, for its suitability for the agreed purpose. This is a necessary part of the translation service, according to international standard ISO 17100. A number of customers order revisions as separate service for their translated texts.

Review - monolingual review of the translated text by a native speaker of the target language. The focus is on spelling corrections, punctuation, sentence structure, stylistics, etc. Review is an essential part of the translation process, especially for less common language pairs for which there are no native speakers of the target language available that may specialize in the given field. A number of customers order reviews as a separate service for their translated texts.

Creative proofreading – the service also referred to as “copywriting,” consists of modifying the text, especially for marketing purposes. You will use it, for example, when you want to attract or convince the target audience. These are usually PR articles, press releases, texts containing slogans, ads, websites, etc.

DTP work - fixing the layout of texts, images, tables, headers, borders, and other elements of a (translated) document in professional applications, as part of preparations for document printing. This service is an important part of translating annual reports, product catalogues, leaflets, user guides, and other types of printed documents.

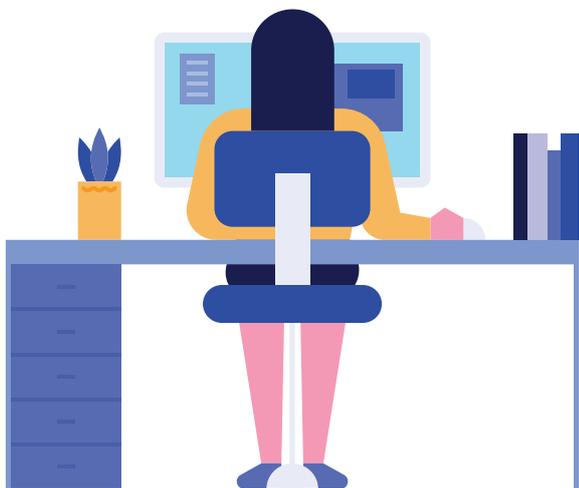
Final proofreading - review of the final text (after DTP) with respect to the typographical rules applicable to the target language (typographic characters, spacing, hyphenation), diacritics/accents (which may be broken as a result of font changes), and completeness of the original text (checking the text after setting).

Translation certified by a court translator – a translation bearing the seal and signature of a court-appointed translator. These are mostly translations of official documents for official purposes. When determining the delivery dates, it is necessary to take into account that the translation will need to be sent by postal service or handed over in person.

Useful tip 1



When shopping for translation services, always emphasize that the bid price **must include a revision by another translator**. According to international standard ISO 17100, the revision is necessary.



Interpreting Services

Interpretation - rendering spoken or signed information from one language to another language in an oral or signed form.

Consecutive interpreting - sequential interpretation. The speaker's speech is interpreted in sections. The speaker makes logical pauses during his speech, thus giving the interpreter the possibility to translate the things said in the foreign language. As a rule, sequential interpretation is used during events where a small quantity of members is present, such as negotiations, presentations, briefings, press conferences, workshops and trainings.

Simultaneous interpreting - conference interpreting. The interpreter usually sits in a special cabin, and simultaneous interpretations are transmitted to the receivers as the speaker speaks. This type of interpretation is suitable, especially, for international conferences, congresses, workshops, training sessions, foreign language lectures, etc. In each cabin, there are at least two interpreters who alternate during the course of the interpretation. This rule is that one of the basic working conditions for interpreters is that they, regardless of the length of interpreting, alternate roughly after 10 - 20 minutes.

Over-the-phone interpreting - consecutive interpreting done over the phone. In the presence of the recipient, the client is on the phone with the interpreter and uses the microphone and speakers. This type of interpretation is ideal for communication in smaller groups, considerably minimizing the cost of the interpreting service (cost and time of travelling, meal allowances, etc.). It is also possible to use of online communication, videoconferencing, etc.

Court interpreting - interpreting by a court-appointed interpreter. The interpreting is usually consecutive and is required for interpreting official acts.

Useful tip 2



Simultaneous interpreting is very challenging in terms of the interpreter's concentration. This is why **interpreters usually work in teams of at least 2** for each language pair. To speed up your communication with bidders, always state in the tender documentation that you are seeking the price for 2 interpreters.



How to Create Tender Documentation

When compiling your tender documentation for translation or interpretation services, always take into account the specific aspects of these services. This will help you prevent delays and ensure the success of the bidding process.

Your tender documentation should include the following:

Translation Services

1. **Units counted** - as a general rule, the length of a translation is counted in words or standard pages.



Words - normally, the number of source text words is counted. The advantage is that the translation service provider is able to provide an exact price quotation before beginning the translation project. This is the smallest possible billed unit of translated text.

Standard pages - a translation is usually billed based on the length (number of standard pages) of the translated text. However, there is nothing to prevent counting by the source text. Always make sure to clearly define what a standard page is. It is best to define 1 standard page as 1 500 characters, without spaces.

2. **File format of text for translation** - it is important to clarify whether the original texts will be editable (mostly MS Office) or non-editable (scanned documents, handwritten texts, editable files converted to PDFs, etc.). Providing source texts in editable formats may help you achieve considerable savings. Converting documents from non-editable to editable formats and any subsequent graphic work can often be quite costly. Also, due to modern translation tools, translation service providers are able to offer translations in, not very common, formats, such as InDesign, FrameMaker, or Adobe Illustrator. They will also always be able to process your content in HTML, XML, DITA, JSON, etc. Do not convert your source data to PDFs.

3. **Amount of non-editable files for translation** - provide, at least, an estimated amount of non-editable files in the total scope of the documents submitted for translation. You will help your business partner provide a better quality price quotation.

4. **Required delivery dates** - if you are shopping for high-quality translations, please take into account the maximum daily capacities of translators and reviewers. Each translation should ideally be done by 1 translator and 1 reviewer, who are responsible for consistency in the terminology throughout the translated document. If you are not pressed for time, please expect that the maximum daily output is 1 500 words or 6 standard pages for a translation of medium-difficulty text, including revisions, if there are no complicated instructions. You will, thus, make sure the quoted price does not include any surcharges for express delivery.

5. **Author of source texts** - was the original text written by a team of specialized authors that produce texts of consistent quality? Or was it a broad and mostly general public? The clarity of the source text greatly affects the complexity of the translation process. If the source text comes from a mix of resources, please provide at least a rough number of authors and their contributions to the total volume.

Useful tip 3

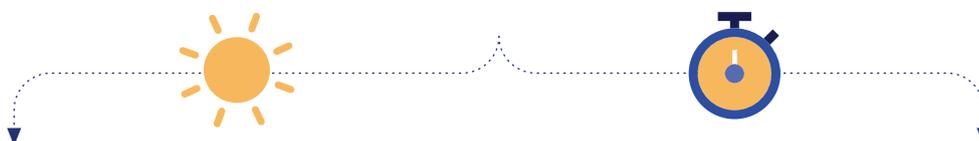


The translation of non-editable files (scanned documents, PDFs, etc.) is **time-consuming**. In your tender documentation you should indicate their amount in respect to the total volume (especially if it is minor). You will receive price quotes without unnecessary extra charges.

6. **Translation target audience** - to make sure that the translation is processed as expected and with the required stylistic quality, please always clarify whether the translations will be presented to the general or professional public, and if the texts will be only used internally or are to be published.
7. **Additional services** - before you announce your request for tenders, think about whether you need any additional services, such as creative proofreading, desktop publishing and the related final proofreading, etc.
8. **Subcontractors** - consider whether translators and interpreters working as freelancers for your translation service provider need to be treated as subcontractors. This will result in an extra administrative burden and time needed, not only for preparation but also for evaluating the customer's bids. Subcontractors must demonstrate all of the basic, professional and technical qualification criteria. Full responsibility for the quality of the delivered services lies with the translation service provider, which usually has professional liability insurance.

Interpreting Services

1. **Units counted** - varying, depending on the form of interpreting.



Half-day/day for consecutive or simultaneous interpreting on site, a half-day = 4 hours, day = 8 hours.

Half an hour/hour for over-the-phone or video-conference interpreting – this billing unit cannot be used for other types of interpreting.

2. **Venue** - take possible travel costs and travel time into account. Ideally, indicate in which cities (or countries) the interpretation will take place and how the venues will be structured. Specify whether you will arrange for transportation.
3. **Usual duration of interpretation** – this, especially, applies to on-site interpreting, if you are looking for price quotations, including transportation to the venue. Provide a realistic estimate in order to get a more objective price quotation and make a successful choice for the service provider.
4. **Provision of interpreting equipment** - explain if you are also looking for interpreting equipment, depending on the type of interpreting:
 - **Simultaneous interpreting** - specify whether the customer requires the interpreting service provider to also arrange for interpreting equipment (microphones, headphones, an interpreting booth, audio equipment, recording equipment, etc.), transportation to the venue and technical staff.
 - **Over-the-phone or video-conference interpreting** - if the customer has a phone with a microphone and speakers, or a hands-free device that can be connected to the phone, or whether the customer expects the interpreting service provider to arrange for these, and at what quantities.

Useful tip 4

A quality provider of interpreting services will be able to provide over-the-phone or videoconference interpreting without any impact on the service quality. If you want to **reduce the cost** of interpreting, consider whether it is really necessary **to have an interpreter present** on-site.



Important

1. **Required specialization** - for quality translation and interpretation services, it is important to make sure that your vendors understand the professional terminology. Ideally, include a sample text from the translation batch in the request for proposals. Or, provide as many details as possible about the translated texts/interpreting setup (type of text/action, expertise, complexity of the professional terminology, etc.). The translation of a complex medical or legal document is a more demanding task than the translation of an internal memo for the customer's staff.
2. **Required volumes** - indicate the volume of the required services for the duration of the agreement, or the volumes realized during a previous (similar) period of time.
3. **Amount of individual language pairs/types of services** - the costs for the individual types of services may considerably differ (over-the-phone vs. on-site interpreting, consecutive vs. simultaneous interpreting, certified translation vs. translation without certification, etc.). If you wish to obtain an objective price quotation, make sure to specify the amount of individual types of services in respect to the total volume. The same is true for specifying the amount of individual language pairs, where the costs will vary depending on the number of linguists for each language pair.
4. **Amount of express-delivery orders** - if you are looking for express-delivery services, also consider the fact that quality translators and interpreters are often fully booked for at least a few weeks. Therefore, you should expect express charges. To minimize these additional costs, please indicate in the amount of such express-delivery services in the tender documentation.
5. **Selection criteria** - when selecting the best service provider, do not consider the price only, but also the expertise of individual bidders. We recommend that you ask for reference letters from the bidders' clients, corresponding to the volumes of the planned contract. Reference letters should ideally prove the vendors' specialization in services corresponding to the characteristics of the contract (unless it is too specific and it is not possible to select from multiple bidders).



Useful tip 5



Save the time you will spend on providing additional information, by specifying **the estimated volumes** of the individual types of inquired services and languages, in the tender documentation.

Useful tip 6



Will you ask the service provider to be available outside normal working hours? This can lead to a considerable increase in the price quotations you will receive from the bidders.

Useful tip 7



Create a **single template** for your tender documentation, which will contain all the details above. You can find a sample in Annex 1.

Evaluating Proposals

Importance of evaluation criteria

Define the ratio of importance of the individual selection criteria. The best price/quality ratio in translation and interpreting services is 30 : 70 (price : quality).

Determine the order of the bidders

You can use the following method to determine the best offer.

1. Give the highest number of points to the best offer, i.e. the offer with the lowest price and/or the highest volume of reference services proven by reference letters. Then allocate points to the following offers, according to the following algorithms:



2. Count the points earned by the bidders, in both criteria, and list the bidders in descending order.

Select the bidders

As soon as you list the bidders in order, based on the economic value of their offers, we suggest that you sign several general agreements with service providers at the top of the ranking. Then place individual purchase orders, based on the ranking. If the first translation service provider is unable to accept a purchase order or if they do not confirm

¹ Assuming that we allocate a maximum of 100 points to that criterion.

² Assuming that we allocate a maximum of 100 points to that criterion.

Useful tip 8



Are you inquiring a **wider spectrum** about different services or language pairs from which you expect different pricing? For evaluating received bids in the best way, use **the sum of the total bid prices as the price criterion**, for all of the inquired types of services and/or for all language pairs.



Useful tip 9



Minimize the time spent evaluating bids by asking bidders **to submit their offers, using a unified template** for all bidders. You can find a sample in Annex 2.

it by the given deadline, place a purchase order with the next translation service provider, etc. If you are seeking faster translation services, send an inquiry to all your partners. You can then place the purchase order with the highest-ranking translation service provider that has confirmed availability by the given deadline.

Using this system, you will enjoy the following advantages:

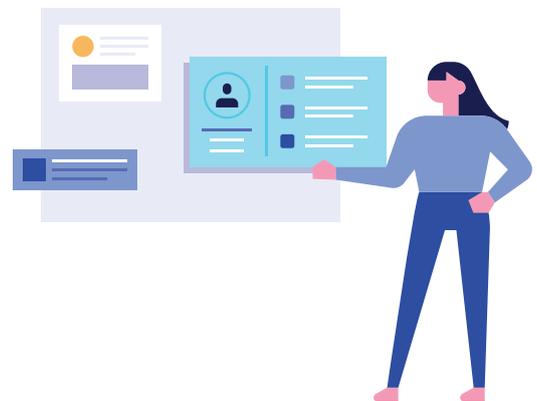
1. You maintain contact with a sufficient number of translation service providers with capacities for larger volumes of texts.
2. If the translation service provider of your first choice is unable to continue fulfilling their contractual obligations for any reason, you do not need to run a new round of tender documentation.

Regularly review the ranking of translation service providers that result from the bidding procedure

Take into account the quality of the previous translation jobs, for example as follows:



This way, you can ensure that the ranking of translation service providers always reflects the real quality of their services during the existence of the contract.



In addition to the linguistic quality of translation services, you can also base your on-going assessment on the following criteria:

Criteria for the assessment of translation services	Criteria for the assessment of interpreting services	Common assessment criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timely delivery of translations • Use of correct terminology, according to the customer's glossary • Adherence to other specific instructions (e.g. skipping selected parts of the text, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speech clarity (articulation, reasonable speech tempo, etc.) • Meeting deadlines • Interpreter's personal presentation (positive attitude, politeness, dress code for on-site interpreting and/or online interpreting, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professionalism, flexibility, communication with the contact person • Confirmation of purchase orders by the required deadline • Speed at which the customer's additional questions, if any, are answered • Accuracy of information about the status of individual purchase orders • Timely and correct invoicing

Useful tip 10 

If you are looking for long-term, sustainable quality and availability for the tendered services, consider selecting **at least 3 bidders** with whom you will sign an agreement and with whom you will place purchase orders – in an order reflecting the quality of their offers and services.

Final Words

This document provides a comprehensive overview of how to effectively set up and organize tender documentation to select translation and interpreting service providers, leading to the objective selection of ideal service providers and your long-term satisfaction with the services provided.

The Association of Czech Translation Agencies has a permanent interest in developing and updating these options. Please use the contact details below to contact the Association with any suggestions for improvements or changes.





Ten Recommendations for Selecting Quality **Translation and Interpreting** Service Providers



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