



Date: August 7, 2024
To: All Vendors
Subject: Addendum #2

REFERENCE: P062-24 Call Center Support Services

This Addendum forms part of the contract and clarifies, corrects or modifies original proposal document.

NEW SUBMISSION DATE & TIME: August 16, 2024 by 2:00 PM
NEW OPENING DATE & TIME: August 16, 2024 at 2:15 PM

Question 1: What is the date by which you will answer these questions?

Answer 1: Answers to questions will be posted on BPUB's webpage after August 6, 2024.

Question 2: If there was a previous solicitation for these services, what was its title, number, release date, and due date?" a standard question?

Answer 2: There was not a previous solicitation.

Question 3: Is there a deadline for questions?

Answer 3: Deadline for submitting questions is August 6, 2024.

Question 4: Are bidders permitted to deviate in any way from any manner of quoting fees you may be expecting? For example, if there is a pricing page in the RFP, can bidders submit an alternate fee structure? If there is no pricing page in the RFP, do you have any preference for how bidders should quote fees or can bidders create their own pricing categories?

Answer 4: There is a pricing page included in the RFP, however, vendor can submit an alternate fee structure.

Question 5: Please describe your level of satisfaction with your current or recent vendor(s) for the same purchasing activity, if applicable.

Answer 5: Not applicable.

Question 6: Has the current contract gone full term?

Answer 6: Not applicable.

Question 7: Have all options to extend the current contract been exercised?

Answer 7: Not applicable.

Question 8: Who is the incumbent, and how long has the incumbent been providing the requested services?

Answer 8: Not applicable.

Question 9: To what extent will the location of the bidder's proposed location or headquarters have a bearing on any award?

Answer 9: Location is preferred within the United States.

Question 10: How are fees currently being billed by any incumbent(s), by category, and at what rates?

Answer 10: Not applicable.

Question 11: What estimated or actual dollars were paid last year, last month, or last quarter to any incumbent(s)?

Answer 11: Not applicable.

Question 12: What is the minimum required total call capacity?

Answer 12: BPUB is requesting vendors provide minimum and maximum capacity they are able to provide.

Question 13: What is the minimum simultaneous inbound call capacity?

Answer 13: BPUB is requesting vendors provide minimum and maximum capacity they are able to provide.

Question 14: What is the maximum wait time?

Answer 14: BPUB is requesting vendors provide internal metrics expectations for this KPI.

Question 15: What is the maximum hold time?

Answer 15: BPUB is requesting vendors provide internal metrics expectations for this KPI.

Question 16: What percentage of inbound calls must be answered by a live operator?

Answer 16: BPUB is requesting vendors provide internal metrics expectations for this KPI. Specifically, what is the minimum and maximum call volume vendor can support.

Question 17: What percentage of calls must be resolved without a transfer, second call, or a return call?

Answer 17: BPUB is requesting vendors provide internal metrics expectations for this KPI.

Question 18: What is the maximum percentage of calls that can be terminated by the caller without resolution?

Answer 18: BPUB is requesting vendors provide internal metrics expectations for this KPI.

Question 19: What is the required degree of dedication for the call center? (Can the call center work on other contracts at the same time as this one)?

Answer 19: If vendor works on multiple contracts, please provide information as to how CSR's are able to transition for each call using multiple system integrations and platforms.

Question 20: What is the required degree of dedication for the operators? (Can the operators work on other contracts at the same time as this one)?

Answer 20: If vendor works on multiple contracts, please provide information as to how CSR's are able to transition for each call using multiple system integrations and platforms.

Question 21: Are callers required or allowed to connect with a message verification system or pre-recorded message before connecting to a live operator, or must a live operator be the initial contact?

Answer 21: Currently, BPUB uses an IVR system to route queues. IVR will continue to be utilized by BPUB to route calls to selected vendor during high call volumes.

Question 22: What information is to be included in call logs?

Answer 22: Information regarding Performance standards and reporting is available in the RFP.

Question 23: What is the current average wait time for phone calls?

Answer 23: The average wait time is approximately 8 minutes.

Question 24: What is the current average handle time for phone calls and other types of communications?

Answer 24: BPUB's internal call center has 2 queues; English and Spanish. Once a vendor is selected, BPUB will work on potentially adding additional queues / skills. Current average handle time is 5 minutes.

Question 25: What is the current average after-call work time for operators?

Answer 25: BPUB currently does not utilize ACW. Please provide internal metrics for this KPI.

Question 26: Over the past year, what is the percentage of calls received in English versus non-English?

Answer 26: 63% English and 37% Spanish.

Question 27: Over the past year, what percentage of calls received were in Spanish?

Answer 27: 63% English and 37% Spanish.

Question 28: What time of day, days of the week, or times of the year do calls typically peak?

Answer 28: Currently, BPUB's Call Center operates from 8 am to 5 pm, Central Time, Monday to Friday. The purpose of this RFP is to select a vendor that can act as support after holidays, during lunch times, trainings, and unexpected high call volume as needed. BPUB is exploring the possibility of extending call center operations to a 24 hour / 365-day call center based on the overall proposed pricing. Option A and Option B are included in this RFP.

Question 29: Can you please confirm if BPUB will consider nearshore, offshore, or work from home locations to fulfill 24/7 Call Center support services.

Answer 29: See answer to question 9 above.

Question 30: Is the BPUB interested in contracting for all of the work including normal business hours? Or, are you only looking for assistance outside of normal business hours?

Answer 30: BPUB is looking for two options: 1. Vendor to supplement BPUB call center staff during times of high call volume during normal business hours, and 2. Vendor to provide call center services outside normal business hours.

Question 31: Can you provide data on the percentage of BPUB's customer base that primarily speaks Spanish? How does this percentage vary across different service areas?

Answer 31: 63% English and 37% Spanish. There is no variation in service area.

Question 32: What percentage of the calls received by the current BPUB Call Center are in Spanish? Are there specific times of the day or types of inquiries that have a higher likelihood of requiring Spanish-speaking agents?

Answer 32: 63% English and 37% Spanish. There are no Spanish language specific metrics. Our customer base is largely bilingual or monolingual in Spanish.

Question 33: Are there particular services or support areas (e.g., billing, technical support, emergency services) where bilingual support is critical? Are there any specific scenarios where Spanish-speaking agents are particularly essential?

Answer 33: Our customer base is largely bilingual or monolingual in Spanish. Currently, all BPUB CSR's are bilingual.

Question 34: Does BPUB have data on customer language preferences when they contact the Call Center? For example, is there an option for customers to select their preferred language when calling in, and if so, what percentage chooses Spanish?

Answer 34: Currently, BPUB's IVR system has two queues: English and Spanish. Customers may select English or Spanish. CSR's do not have the ability to select from either queue as calls are handled in the order in which they are received.

Question 35: Are there specific roles within the Call Center (e.g., supervisors, managers) where bilingual capabilities are more crucial? Is always there a need for a certain percentage of bilingual staff, including during after-hours or emergency situations?

Answer 35: Call handling CSRs must be capable of communicating with customers in Spanish. A certain percentage of vendor agents is not specified, but must expect for almost 40% of calls be exclusively in Spanish. Currently, all BPUB CSR's are bilingual.

Question 36: What are the expectations for the proficiency level in both languages? Are there specific language assessments or certifications required for bilingual staff?

Answer 36: Designated vendor agents must be able and expected to effectively communicate with a Spanish speaking customer. No language assessment will be provided and no certifications are required.

Question 37: Can you confirm the specific Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and their target levels, such as Average Speed of Answer (ASA), Hold Time (HT), Daily Service Level (SL), Abandonment Rate (AR), and Average Handle Time (AHT)?

Answer 37: BPUB is requesting vendors provide internal metrics expectations for KPIs.

Question 38: What specific legal and regulatory requirements must be adhered to, particularly concerning data privacy and security? Are there any unique considerations for utilities in Texas?

Answer 38: This information is currently not available.

Question 39: Can you elaborate on the data security protocols, including data encryption, access controls, and data retention policies? What measures are in place to ensure compliance with data protection laws?

Answer 39: This information is currently not available.

Question 40: What systems and platforms are currently in use (e.g., Cayenta, City Works, Cisco)? What are the integration requirements for these systems with the vendor's technology?

Answer 40: Current platforms include Cayenta, CityWorks, and Cisco.

Question 41: What specific reporting capabilities are required, including real-time and scheduled reports? Can you provide examples of the types of reports expected?

Answer 41: Information regarding reporting is available in the RFP.

Question 42: What are the requirements for call recording and monitoring? How long should call recordings be retained, and who will have access to them?

Answer 42: Call recordings will need to be retained for 6 months. If unable to retain for 6 months please provide vendor capabilities for retaining calls. Customer Service Manager and Supervisors will need access to call recordings. All call recordings are subject to the Texas Open Records.

Question 43: What is the expectation for handling calls during emergencies, such as natural disasters? What are the specific requirements for disaster recovery and business continuity plans?

Answer 43: Vendor will support call volume as needed during Emergencies. Please provide vendors disaster recovery and business continuity plans.

Question 44: What is the process for escalating issues that cannot be resolved by the vendor's staff? Who are the designated contacts at BPUB for different types of inquiries?

Answer 44: BPUB will provide contact information for escalated issues during normal business hours. Outside of normal business hours, vendor will gather information for a supervisor or BPUB representative to respond to inquiry.

Question 45: Does BPUB have any restrictions or preferences regarding the geographical location of the call center operations? Specifically, is nearshore support allowed, and if so, are there any specific countries or regions that are preferred or restricted?

Answer 45: Location is preferred within the United States.

Question 46: Are we required to use Texas-based resources, or can we recruit from outside Texas?

Answer 46: Non-Texas based resources can be utilized.

Question 47: Is this RFP being managed through the SAM (System Award Management) tool?

Answer 47: Yes.

Question 48: Do we need to agree to all conditions without any redlines?

Answer 48: Vendors are encouraged to submit their proposals for BPUB's review.

Question 49: Are there any special IT requirements we should be aware of?

Answer 49: None other than specified within the RFP or addendums.

Question 50: When is the anticipated start date for this project?

Answer 50: Vendors are encouraged to submit proposed timeline for implementation including training, integration, etc.

Question 51: How many agents are you looking to outsource?

Answer 51: The purpose of this RFP is to select a vendor that can act as support after holidays, during lunch times, trainings, and unexpected high call volume as needed. BPUB is exploring the possibility of extending call center operations to a 24 hour / 365-day call center based on the overall proposed pricing. Option A and Option B are included in this RFP. BPUB is not looking for a specific number of agents. Vendor should provide capacity levels to assist as support for BPUB.

Question 52: Do you need any languages other than English and Spanish, supported?

Answer 52: None; English and Spanish only required.

Question 53: Do our agents need to be located in the United States?

Answer 53: See answer to question 9 above.

Question 54: Is the vendor going to be an extension of their telecom network or does the vendor need to supply their own CRM, reporting tools, etc.?

Answer 54: Approved and selected vendor will be granted access to BPUB billing system and reporting tools. If vendor has their own telecom network and is compatible with the scope of work within the RFP and deemed a non-risk to the BPUB network, BPUB will allow usage of vendor's designated telecom network.

Question 55: What's the average duration of a call?

Answer 55: Average handle time is approximately 5 minutes.

Question 56: What is the expected call volume, broken down by inbound and outbound calls, average handle time, and peak periods - daytime hours?

Answer 56: Vendor will be responsible for inbound calls only. Daily high queue times occur during 11am to 2pm. High call volume is expected to be after holidays and the first of every month. On average, the Call Center handles 12,000-14,000 calls a month.

Question 57: What is the expected call volume, broken down by inbound and outbound calls, average handle time, and peak periods - after hours/weekends/holidays?

Answer 57: No data available. The Call Center does not currently operate after hours, weekends, or holidays.

Question 58: Any expected SLA's? Are there penalties if SLA's aren't met?

Answer 58: BPUB is requesting vendors provide information on what SLA's vendor can meet based on their support capacity.

Question 59: Is working remotely acceptable for call center staff?

Answer 59: Yes, working remotely is acceptable.

Question 60: Since we operate 24/7, could you please share the hours of operation for your project.

Answer 60: Assistance is being requested by vendor for times of high call volume during normal business hours and after hours. Therefore, potential hours of operation for vendor is 24/7.

Question 61: What is the current AHT or the average AHT of the monthly calls?

Answer 61: Current AHT is approximately 5 minutes.

Question 62: What are the current Occupancy thresholds that the agents are running?

Answer 62: There are currently no required occupancy thresholds.

Question 63: Can we be provided with monthly breakdowns on volumes?

Answer 63: This information is not currently available.

Question 64: Is work from home acceptable or is it preferred to be in office?

Answer 64: Yes, work from home is acceptable. However, location is preferred within the United States.

Question 65: Do you want to see nearshore/offshore pricing as well?

Answer 65: Location is preferred within the United States.

Question 66: The RFP mentions a W9 needing to be returned, but we don't see it in the documents. Is this something needing done that we are missing, or will it be needed upon the company that is awarded the contract?

Answer 66: The W9 is on page 28 of the RFP document. It can be returned with the RFP response or if awarded the contract, it will need to be provided at that time.

Question 67: We received the RFP and Addendum. Are there any other notices that require our attention to respond aside from the ones included? We checked the website as well, but only saw the two documents.

Answer 67: The RFP posted is the two-page document. The full document can be emailed to vendor upon returning the Acknowledgement form by checking the second ().

Question 68: Is a fully remote/cloud-based solution permitted?

Answer 68: Yes, however, location is preferred within the United States.

Question 69: What is the estimated call volume for the afterhours/overflow call center described in the Scope of Work?

Answer 69: Metrics are unavailable.

Question 70: What is the AHT goal?

Answer 70: BPUB is requesting vendors provide information on what SLA's vendor can meet based on their support capacity.

Question 71: What is the service level goal?

Answer 71: BPUB is requesting vendors provide information on what SLA's vendor can meet based on their support capacity.

Question 72: May we please get call intervals by 30 min for each day of the week?

Answer 72: BPUB does not currently have that level of data.

Question 73: Please define Red Flag Rules.

Answer 73: The Red Flags Rule sets out how certain businesses and organizations, such as BPUB, must develop, implement, and administer Identity Theft Prevention Programs. The program must include four basic elements, which together create a framework to address the threat of identity theft.

Question 74: Can the BPUB please describe the nature of and volume of outbound calls? What is the annual number of outbound calls?

Answer 74:

Question 75: Can the BPUB please describe its view of the call flow from the BPUB Call Center to the Firm? What specific connectivity will be needed between the BPUB and the Firm?

Answer 75: This information is currently not available.

Question 76: For the Cayenta and City Works Systems, what type of connectivity will the BPUB need to utilize these systems? Are there licensing fees? If "yes", what are the systems costs for both systems?

Answer 76: This information is currently not available.

Question 77: In emergencies, is your reference that the emergency has caused the BPUB to not to be able to transfer calls received to the Firm and a separate phone number (assumed owned by the Firm) will be made available for calls? Please describe your Emergency Plan with reference to the Firm.

Answer 77: In the event of an emergency, BPUB expects vendor to support as specified within the RFP.

Question 78: Can bidders respond to Option A only, or are bidders required to respond to both Options A and B?

Answer 78: Vendors are encouraged to submit their proposals for BPUB's review.

Question 79: Is CIS another system outside of those mentioned on Page 6? If yes, please describe all connectivity and licensing needed to connect and use the CIS functions.

Answer 79: No, BPUB's CIS system is Cayenta.

Question 80: What is the current monthly number of escalations (of calls) to a supervisor for specialized customer service?

Answer 80: Supervisor escalation metrics are currently not available.

Question 81: Due to the short timeframe from when questions are due to the proposal due date, will the BPUB accept electronic proposal submittals followed by hard copy, OR extend the proposal due date to all for bidders to consider the responses to questions in their proposals?

Answer 81: Currently, BPUB is not accepting electronic proposal submissions. Submission date has been extended as noted at the beginning of this document.

Question 82: Does the BPUB require agents to be located onshore?

Answer 82: Location is preferred within the United States.

Question 83: Does the vendor need to provide the IVR/ACD to receive calls routed to them, from the BPUB?

Answer 83: No, BPUB utilizes its own IVR.

Question 84: Can the vendor provide a remote workforce?

Answer 84: Yes, however, location is preferred within the United States.

Question 85: What percent of agents need to be bi-lingual?

Answer 85: There is no specified percentage, however, all BPUB CSRs are bilingual.

Question 86: Is there a contract currently in place for this work? If yes, who is the incumbent?

Answer 86: There is not a contract currently in place.

Question 87: What is the current Average Handle Time (AHT)?

Answer 87: Current average handle time is 5 minutes.

Question 88: Will the BPUB provide all of the necessary materials for the vendor's training team to provide agent training?

Answer 88: Yes.

Question 89: How long is new agent training?

Answer 89: Approximately, 1-2 weeks or as needed.

Question 90: Are there any forms of communication (e.g., email, chat, etc.) to customers outside of voice?

Answer 90: Currently, only voice communication.

Question 91: Will the selected vendor take all the IB/OB calls? If “no”, how many calls per day/month will the vendor be responsible for?

Answer 91: No, vendor will be required to assist with inbound over flow calls during times of high call volume during normal business hours and all inbound calls outside of normal business hours.

Question 92: What are the QA requirements for agents? (e.g., X # of calls scored per week)

Answer 92: BPUB is requesting vendors provide information on what SLA’s vendor can meet based on their support capacity.

Question 93: Page 4, Objective, indicates the internal call center has 11 FTE and handles 12,000 – 14,000 calls per month. How many calls per month are projected to be handled by the outsource support partner?

Answer 93: Projected numbers are not available.

Question 94: Page 8, Option B, indicates the support partner should “Provide a system that allows for on-line input of power outage reports by customer address”. Can you clarify more detail for this requirement? Is this an on-line tool that is public facing directly with the utility customer or is this a tool the call center agents will be using to document caller information?

Answer 94: BPUB currently has a reporting tool on the BPUB website that is public facing that vendor’s call center agents can report outages.

Question 95: What would you like to see in a vendor that you do not have with your current solution?

Answer 95: BPUB is currently looking for a vendor to supplement our existing call center during times of high call volume and outside of normal business hours.

Question 96: Can you provide a Job Description for the agent?

Answer 96: Under general supervision, provides service to Brownsville Public Utilities Board (BPUB) customers by responding to inquiries about service availability, general customer service inquiries, billing, and delinquent accounts. Works in accordance with established policies and procedures and under the supervision of the designated individual or supervisor. Provides expertise and services to help customers obtain efficient use of utility services. Acts as a resource with customers by providing information and resolving customer service or other standard issues as they arise.

Question 97: Do you have call arrival patterns by hour/day you can provide for last 30 days?

Answer 97: BPUB currently does not track those metrics.

Question 98: Can you provide the historical data on seasonal volume spike expectations?

Answer 98: BPUB does not currently track that metric, however, call volume after holidays and during the summer months tend to be higher.

Question 99: For New hire requirements, what are the Background check and drug screen requirements?

Answer 99: Selected vendor will have their own protocols as vendor's employees will not be employed by BPUB.

Question 100: Are there any BCP/DR requirements? (Business Continuity or Disaster Recovery)

Answer 100: There are no specific requirements. Please provide vendor's internal BCP and/or disaster recovery plan for BPUB's review and evaluation.

Question 101: Are there specific InfoSec Requirements or PCI Compliance required?

Answer 101: Selected vendor is required to follow all BPUB's policies and procedures regarding information security and PCI compliance standards.

Question 102: Are you open to a contract of 3-5 years?

Answer 102: This RFP is requesting services for a year, but has an option to extend up to 4 years.

Question 103: What are the key performance indicators (KPIs) and goals to measure agent and contact center performance?

Answer 103: BPUB is requesting vendors provide internal metrics expectations for KPIs.

Question 104: Are there requirements for Work from Home employees?

Answer 104: No different requirements for work from home employees versus call center employees.

The signature of the company agent, for the acknowledgement of this addendum, shall be required. **Complete information below and return via e-mail to: dsolitaire@brownsville-pub.com.**

I hereby acknowledge receipt of this addendum.

Company: _____

Agent Name: _____

Agent Signature: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ **State:** _____ **Zip:** _____

Phone Number: _____ **E-mail address:** _____

If you have any further questions about the Proposal, call 956-983-6366.

BY: ***Diane Solitaire***
Purchasing