

Request for Proposals (RFP)

Seeking proposals for an after-hours emergency answering and toll-free forwarding service

This is a re-issuance of a similar RFP that was previously posted in May – July 2022 by IREX. If you submitted a proposal to the former RFP, please note that you will need to submit a proposal to be considered for this procurement.

IREX believes in and strives for a more just, prosperous, and inclusive world by focusing on people around the globe who, due to persistent poverty, repression, and injustice, are prevented from achieving their full potential. IREX embraces a people-focused approach to development that invests in human potential and the conditions that help people thrive. IREX works with partners in more than 100 countries in four areas essential to progress: cultivating leaders, empowering youth, strengthening institutions, and increasing access to quality education and information.

Overview

IREX seeks an after-hours emergency answering service that will receive incoming calls, gather basic information, and as appropriate, direct calls from international participants traveling to the United States and American participants traveling internationally on an exchange program to designated IREX staff members.

Scope of Work

Companies interested in providing this service must submit a proposal, including a breakdown of estimated costs and additional fees, which demonstrates the company's capacity to provide customer support that meets the following specifications:

- 24/7/365 after hours emergency support for international participants who travel to the U.S. to participate and Americans who travel internationally to participate in an exchange program. Participants call this line to receive high-quality support while they travel and for the duration of their program. This is intended to serve as an after-hours line, but due to the international travel and varying time zones, participants can call this line at any hour.
- Must provide a landline number that rings directly to call center agents that participants can call while in transit outside of the U.S. in addition to a toll-free number for calls within the U.S.
- Toll-Free Forwarding service from a standard identifiable number to IREX staff members' personal phones. This will assist IREX staff in understanding that they are receiving a forwarded call from the after-hours line when answering their personal phones to respond to participants.
- Provide participant support following these guidelines:
 - When participants call the toll-free number, they are immediately connected with a 24-hour call center. A trained agent will follow IREX procedures to collect basic information about the participant and the emergency they are experiencing (e.g., first and last name, city and country of participant, phone number and email address, IREX program name, nature of emergency).
 - The agent will then follow the provided IREX guidance to transfer the call to the IREX staff member on-duty. The agent will provide a summary of the emergency, then connect the staff member with the participant. The agent will use the IREX provided

Phone Tree guidance to call additional numbers as listed in order if the first contact does not answer after two call attempts.

- The IREX staff member will advise the participants and/or manage the emergency.
- Provider will have a standard process for providing summary information on calls, including IREX numbers contacted, to IREX.
- Ability to handle high call volumes (potentially up to fifteen calls in a night) particularly during the peak travel season of May– September.
- Professional trained agents who are dedicated to following IREX protocols and procedures when answering participant calls. These procedures include a script and detailed process for numbers to call.
- Accommodations for participants who are deaf or hearing or speech impaired. These accommodations may include Teletypewriter (TTY) and Internet Protocol Relay (IP Relay) services.
- Agent ability to work with English as a second language (ESL) participants.

Deadline

Proposal Due Date: September 2, 2022

Anticipated Award Date: October 1, 2022

Submitted to: rfp.hotlineservices@irex.org

How to Submit a Proposal

Proposals should include the following details:

- Written Response (Please limit to 5 pages) – Please describe the qualifications of your company and the services you could provide in response to the items listed in the Scope of Work above. Please confirm the processes are present to meet the needs of IREX and provide an outline of the available timing and key steps for setting up the service.
- Cost – Please provide a cost structure and breakdown of provided services including any additional fees associated with the service.

IREX reserves the right not to accept proposals if they do not meet the necessary requirements.

If you are interested in providing this service, please e-mail a proposal to rfp.hotlineservices@irex.org. Proposals must be received no later than 5:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time on the closing date indicated above. Questions may also be directed to the email listed above in advance of the proposal submission deadline. All proposals submitted must be valid for a period of not less than sixty (60) calendar days from the proposal due date indicated above.

Proposal Evaluation

The evaluation criteria are listed in descending order starting with the most important factors to be evaluated.

- Technical Approach (80 Points Maximum):
 - Qualifications and Expertise: Institutional qualifications and technical expertise (20 Points maximum)
 - Technical Response: Services and support in response to requirements (20 Points maximum)
 - Functionality: Assessment of service functions and usability (20 Points maximum)

- Logistics: Timing, availability, and clear procedure (20 Points maximum)
- Cost and explanation of billing (20 points Maximum):
 - Cost Proposal: Reasonable value and clear outline of how IREX will be billed for the service (20 Points maximum)

Evaluation and ranking of proposals will be done by IREX in Washington, DC. IREX at its discretion may ask for additional information.

Contract Award and Renewal

The awarded bidder will sign a service agreement with IREX. IREX reserves the right, based on availability of funding and vendor performance, to enter into subsequent contractual agreements with the winning vendor for a period of up to three years without issuing a new RFP.

Questions Received Related to this Requests for Proposals – After-Hours Emergency Answering and Toll-Free Forwarding Service:

1Q: Current call volume monthly or annually

1A: For the month of July, the call volume was 148. From January to June the call volume was 367. Most calls occur during the summer months since that is when a bulk of IREX's participants travel.

2Q: Current caller language in addition to English

2A: IREX anticipates that all callers will speak English when calling the after-hours line.

3Q: Is a preference for how callers will be authenticated?

3A: There currently is no authentication method, but we request that calls confirm their name, program, and program point of contact with the after-hours line vendor. When the after-hours line vendor connects with IREX, it will only be IREX staff members answering those calls.

4Q: Are you also interested in live chat, email, and/or social media chat options?

4A: IREX would be interested in learning more about live chat options available, but it is not a requirement at this time. If you do have live chat options, please include it in the proposal and provide a price breakdown of call-only option and live chat separately.

5Q: Typical or common nature of call

5A: Some common calls include travel issues such as flight delays and cancellations, lost travel documents, lodging, medical or safety issues, or legal issues.

6Q: Are you interested in follow-up (out-bound calls) to monitor client satisfaction?

6A: No, the selected vendor will not need to conduct follow-up calls to monitor client satisfaction.

7Q: Do you require the contracted vendor to have any particular certifications?

7A: There are no particular certifications that we are requesting from vendors for this procurement at this time.

8Q: Are there any systems or applications that IREX uses that you may be interested in integrating into the call center cloud system?

8A: This is not something IREX is currently exploring with the procurement.

9Q: Are you interested in speech and hearing accessibility options?

9A: Yes, please share any speech and/or hearing accessibility options available in your proposal.

If you have any additional questions related to this RFP, please send an email to rfp.hotlineservices@irex.com.