



TEXAS
Health and Human Services

TEXAS HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION

OPEN ENROLLMENT (OE)
for
Board for Evaluation of Interpreters (BEI) Rater Services

OE No. HHS0016380

ENROLLMENT PERIOD OPENS: July 5, 2025

ENROLLMENT PERIOD CLOSES: August 31, 2029 at 10:30 AM CT

NIGP Class/Item No:
962.58 Professional Services (Not Otherwise Classified)

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SECTION 1. SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Enrollment Period Opens (Posted to HHS OE Opportunities webpage)	July 5, 2025
Enrollment Period Closes (Final date for RECEIPT of Applications)	August 31, 2029 at 10:30 AM CT
Anticipated Contract Start Date	The effective date of a Contract, if any, awarded to an Applicant will be determined at the sole discretion of HHSC

Applications must be **received** by HHSC prior to the closing date as indicated in this Schedule of Events or as changed via an Addendum posted to the HHS Open Enrollment Opportunities webpage. Every Applicant is solely responsible for ensuring its Application is received before the submission period closes. HHSC is not responsible for lost, misdirected or late applications.

The dates in the Schedule of Events are tentative. HHSC reserves the right to modify these dates at any time by posting an Addendum to the HHS Open Enrollment Opportunities webpage.

By submitting an Application, the Applicant represents and warrants that any individual submitting the Application and any related documents on behalf of the Applicant is authorized to do so and to bind the Applicant under any resulting contract.

Withdrawal of Application:

Applications may be withdrawn from consideration or amended at any time prior to the "Enrollment Period Closes" date by emailing a request to the Point of Contact, Section 4. The email subject line should contain the OE number and title as indicated on the cover page. The Applicant is solely responsible for ensuring requests are received timely by HHSC. HHSC is not responsible for lost, misdirected or late emails.

SECTION 2. OVERVIEW

2.1. INTRODUCTION

The Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) is an agency within the Texas Health and Human Services (HHS) system.

HHSC is seeking Applications to establish Contract(s) for rating services of interpreter candidates for the Board for Evaluation of Interpreters (BEI) certification program, in addition to other specialized services on an as-needed basis in accordance with the specifications contained in this Open Enrollment (OE).

To be considered for award, Applicants must submit a comprehensive Application which meets all the requirements of this OE and includes all requested documentation.

2.2. LEGAL AUTHORITY

HHSC is soliciting the services listed herein under and in accordance with Section 81.007 of the Texas Human Resources Code.

2.3. NO GUARANTEE OF VOLUME, USAGE OR COMPENSATION

HHSC does not guarantee any volume, usage, or compensation to be paid to any Contractor under any Contract resulting from this Open Enrollment. Additionally, all contracts resulting from this Open Enrollment are subject to appropriations, the availability of funds, and termination.

SECTION 3. DEFINITIONS AND ACRONYMS

Unless the context clearly indicates otherwise, throughout this Open Enrollment, the definition given to a term below applies whenever the term appears in this Open Enrollment, in any Application submitted in response to this Open Enrollment, and in any Contract awarded as a result of this Open Enrollment. All other terms have their ordinary and common meaning.

TERM	DEFINITION
Addendum	A written clarification or revision to this Open Enrollment. All Addenda will be posted to the HHS Open Enrollment Opportunities web page.
Application	All information and materials submitted by an Applicant in response to this Open Enrollment.
Applicant	Any person or entity that submits an Application in response to this Open Enrollment.
Business Day	Any other day than a Saturday, Sunday, or a day in which Texas State offices are authorized or obligated by law or executive order to be closed.
Contract	Any Contract(s) awarded resulting from this Open Enrollment.
Contractor (Provider)	Each Applicant, if any, awarded a Contract as a result of this Open Enrollment. May also be referred to as Provider. Unless the context clearly indicates otherwise, all terms and conditions of this Open Enrollment and resulting Contract that refer to Applicant apply with equal force to Contractor (Provider).

TERM	DEFINITION
Fiscal Year	HHSC's state fiscal year, September 1 st through August 31 st , unless otherwise specified.
HHS Agency	The Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) and the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) may be identified separately as a "HHS Agency" or collectively as the "HHS Agencies" in this Open Enrollment or any resulting Contract(s).
HHS Open Enrollment Opportunities	The HHS web page where Open Enrollments are posted: https://apps.hhs.texas.gov/pcs/openenrollment.cfm
Open Enrollment (OE)	This document, including all exhibits, attachments and addenda, as applicable, posted on the HHS Open Enrollment Opportunities webpage.
Rater or Raters	Evaluator(s) as defined in Section 81.007 of the Texas Human Resource Code.
Statement of Work	The description of services and deliverables in this Open Enrollment that the Contractor (Provider) is required to provide under the Contract.

SECTION 4. GENERAL INFORMATION

4.1. SOLE POINT OF CONTACT

All questions, requests for clarification, or other communication about this OE shall be made in writing only to the HHSC sole point of contact listed below.

Attempts to ask questions by phone or in person will not be allowed or recognized as valid.

Lisa Herbert, CTCM
Contract Administration Manager
Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services
Email: Lisa.Herbert@hhs.texas.gov

To be considered for contract award, applications must only be submitted to this address. See Section 13 (Application Submission Requirements) for submission requirements.

Do not contact other HHS Agency personnel regarding this OE.

This restriction, as to only communicating in writing with the HHSC sole point of contact identified above, does not preclude discussions between Applicant and agency personnel for the purposes of conducting business unrelated to this OE.

Failure of an Applicant or its representatives to comply with these requirements may result in disqualification of the submitted Application.

4.2. CHANGES, MODIFICATIONS AND CANCELLATION

HHSC reserves the right to change, amend, modify or cancel this OE at any time.

All Applications, including those submitted after cancellation of the OE, become the property of HHSC upon receipt.

4.2.1 ADVERTISEMENT OF CHANGES, MODIFICATIONS OR CANCELLATION

If HHSC determines that the OE needs to be changed or modified, either an Addendum will be posted on the OE Opportunities webpage or the OE will be canceled. The action to be taken will be determined at the sole discretion of HHSC. Furthermore, if the OE will be canceled, HHSC will determine, in its sole discretion, if a new OE will be posted.

No HHS Agency will be responsible or liable in any regard for the failure of any individual or entity to receive notification of any posting to the OE Opportunities webpage.

It is the responsibility of each Applicant to monitor the OE Opportunities webpage for any Addenda or additional information regarding this OE. Failure to monitor the OE Opportunities webpage will in no way release or relieve any Applicant or Contractor of its obligations to fulfill the requirements as posted.

4.3. OFFER PERIOD

By submitting an Application in response to this OE, Applicant agrees that its Application will remain a firm and binding offer to enter into a Contract under all terms and conditions of this OE for at least 240 days from the date applications are due, as stated in Exhibit A (HHS Solicitation Affirmations version 2.6), unless withdrawn by the Applicant before the Enrollment Period closes.

An Applicant may extend the time for which its Application will be honored and include the extended period in the Application.

4.4. COSTS INCURRED

HHSC accepts no obligations for costs incurred in preparing, submitting, and screening an Application, including, but not limited to, costs or expenses related to contract execution.

Applicants understand that issuance of this OE or retention of Applications in no way constitutes a commitment by HHSC to award a Contract. All Applications shall be prepared simply and economically, providing a straightforward, concise delineation of the Applicant's capabilities to satisfy the requirements of this OE and submitted at the sole expense of the Applicant.

4.5. OE QUESTIONS OR CLARIFICATIONS

4.5.1 QUESTIONS AND REQUESTS FOR CLARIFICATION

Written questions and requests for clarification regarding this OE are permitted if submitted by email to the Sole Point of Contact, Section 4.1.

Responses to questions and requests for clarification will not be posted. However, if HHSC determines, based on a question, request for clarification, or any other factor (including, but not limited to notices of ambiguity, conflict, or discrepancy as reference in Section 4.5.3), that the OE needs to be amended or clarified, either an Addendum will be posted on the OE Opportunities webpage or the OE will be canceled. The action to be taken will be determined at the sole discretion of HHSC. Furthermore, if the OE will be canceled, HHSC will determine, in its sole discretion, if a new OE will be posted.

4.5.2 QUESTION AND CLARIFICATION FORMAT

Questions and requests for clarification must include the following information:

- a. the OE number
- b. the question or request for clarification, providing the following information:
 - OE language, topic, section heading
 - Section, paragraph and page number(s) or Exhibit or Attachment

The requestor must provide the following contact information:

- Applicant name

- Phone number
- Email address

4.5.3 AMBIGUITY, CONFLICT, DISCREPANCY

Applicants must notify the Sole Point of Contact, Section 4.1, of any ambiguity, conflict, discrepancy, exclusionary specification, omission or other error in the OE. Notices must be submitted in the same manner for submitting questions.

Each Applicant submits its Application at its own risk.

If an Applicant fails to properly and timely notify the Sole Point of Contact, Section 4.1, of any ambiguity, conflict, discrepancy, exclusionary specification, omission or other error in the OE, the Applicant, whether awarded a Contract or not:

- a. shall have waived any claim of error or ambiguity in the OE and any resulting Contract,
- b. shall not contest the interpretation by HHSC of such provision(s), and
- c. shall not be entitled to additional compensation, relief, or time by reason of ambiguity, conflict, discrepancy, exclusionary specification, omission, or other error or its later correction.

SECTION 5. HUB SUBCONTRACTING PLAN (HSP) REQUIREMENTS

It is the policy of HHS to promote and encourage contracting and subcontracting opportunities for State of Texas-certified Historically Underutilized Businesses (HUBs) in all contracts in compliance with Chapter 2161 of the Texas Government Code and Division 1 of Chapter 20 of Title 34 of the Texas Administrative Code (TAC).

Applicants who may be eligible are encouraged to become HUB certified and may access more information including the State of Texas HUB Application at the CPA website at: <https://comptroller.texas.gov/purchasing/vendor/hub/>.

HHS has determined subcontracting opportunities are not probable under this OE; therefore, a **HSP is not required to be submitted with the Application.**

SECTION 6. CONTRACT TERM

6.1. TERM OF CONTRACT

HHSC may award one or more Contracts under this OE.

Any Contract resulting from this OE will be effective on the signature date of the latter of the Parties to sign the agreement and will expire 5 years from the Effective Date of the Contract, unless terminated earlier pursuant to the terms and conditions of the Contract.

6.2. EXTENSION OPTION

HHSC, at its sole option and subject to availability of funding, may extend the Contract beyond the initial term for up to one year as necessary to ensure continuity of service, to process a new OE to award new Contract(s), for purposes of transition, or as otherwise determined to serve the best interest of the State of Texas.

SECTION 7. MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

To be eligible to apply for a Contract and receive an award, an Applicant must be eligible, qualified and meet all requirements of this OE. Applicant requirements apply with equal force to Contractors awarded Contracts under this OE.

7.1 REQUIRED EXPERIENCE

To be considered for a contract award under this OE, the Applicant shall:

7.1.1 Hold a valid Advanced, Master, SEE, MSS, OC:C, OC:V, Court, Trilingual Advanced, Trilingual Master, Level III, Level IV, or Level V, Texas BEI interpreter certificate for a period of five years or more; or hold a valid Texas BEI CDI, Level V Intermediary, RID CDI, or Texas BEI Medical interpreter certificate, or if the applicant is deaf, have:

- a. three years of experience teaching at an Interpreter Training Program,
or
- b. a valid American Sign Language Teachers Association (ASLTA) certification;

7.1.2 Possess a knowledge of linguistics, sign language theory, and interpreting for the specified level of certification for which rating services are to be provided; and

7.1.3 Possess a knowledge of the English language, paraphrasing, mirror writing, and oral interpreting support techniques to provide oral rating services, if applicable.

7.2 LICENSURE AND ACCREDITATION

Applicant must have all permits, licenses, and certifications required by applicable law.

Contractor providing services that, by law, require a professional license or certification, must hold a current, valid, and applicable Texas license and/or certification in good standing.

SECTION 8. STATEMENT OF WORK

8.1 PROJECT OVERVIEW

The purpose of the HHSC Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services (hereafter, "DHHS") BEI program is to test, rate, and issue certification to sign language and oral interpreters for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing. The BEI rater program is to provide rater services to rate BEI interpreting test candidates' performance tests, based on established testing criteria.

8.2 CONTRACTOR RESPONSIBILITIES

8.2.1 Rater

If a Rater, Contractor shall evaluate the skills of interpreter candidates at varying levels in accordance with the prescribed scoring methodology based on level and type of certification established by DHHS and must rate within an acceptable standard deviation range to ensure a high level of inter-rater reliability. The rater scoring process involves providing effective dialogue and working harmoniously with team members while reviewing and scoring each candidate's performance to assess their proficiency in one or more of the following areas as appropriate to the test being taken:

- a) Spoken English to American Sign Language (ASL);
- b) Spoken English to Signed English;
- c) ASL to Spoken English;
- d) Signed English to Spoken English;
- e) Sight Translation;
- f) ASL to Spoken English to Spoken Spanish (Trilingual interpreting);
- g) English to Spanish Sight Translation and Spanish to English Sight Translation;
- h) Spoken English to SEE;
- i) SEE to Spoken English;
- j) Spoken English to MSS;

- k) MSS to Spoken English;
- l) Visible to Spoken English (Oral transliterating/paraphrasing);
- m) Spoken English to Visible;
- n) Simultaneous Interpreting;
- o) Consecutive Interpreting;
- p) Consecutive Interpreting (Native ASL to Novice Sign Language);
- q) Simultaneous Interpreting (ASL to Close Vision Interpreting);
- r) Platform (ASL to ASL); and
- r) One-way Consecutive Interpreting (ASL to Visual Gestural Communication (VGC)).

8.2.2 Trainer

If a Trainer, Contractor shall, during the morning of the first day of the rater scoring session, provide presentations to raters on scoring procedures prescribed by DHHS, and Contractor shall function as a team leader beginning with the afternoon of the first day of the rater scoring session and subsequent days of the session.

8.2.3 Team Leader

If a Team Leader, Contractor shall, in accordance with the prescribed scoring methodology during scheduled rater scoring sessions, ensure prescribed scoring methodology outlined in the BEI Rater Manual is adhered. This includes, but is not limited to, double checking objective and subjective ratings to ensure candidate is a clear pass or clear fail and taking necessary steps to guide team in discussion when results are in the critical range to ensure a valid end results, documenting and reporting to DHHS issues that arise during training or rating sessions that are disruptive and impedes rating teams ability to function in a productive and harmonious manner, and attending the specialized team leader training and regular rater training session.

8.2.4 Proctor

If a Proctor, Contractor shall provide proctoring services to administer a proficiency test or performance test to prospective interpreter candidates, which may be held at various sites throughout the state of Texas. DHHS will provide the Contractor with written guidance regarding the number of hours authorized for each candidate under the resulting Contract prior to each request for BEI Raters proctoring services.

8.2.5 Data Analyst

If a Data Analyst, Contractor shall enter, analyze and report rater consensus scoring for Texas BEI and other states licensed to use BEI exams. Contractor shall submit to DHHS a report within 15 calendar days from the last day of the scoring session and the report must include the standard deviation per candidate, per rater, and must identify outliers. Contractor shall provide to DHHS all working documents, electronic and paper form, within 5 business days, upon request by DHHS.

8.2.6 Lead Trainer

If a Lead Trainer, Contractor shall prepare training materials, obtain DHHS approval of materials and provide at least two business days of instruction pertaining to the BEI scoring methodology to newly contracted raters or a rater needing additional training (as determined by DHHS). All prepared training materials are property of DHHS and must be returned at conclusion of training event.

8.2.7 TEP Site Monitor

If a TEP Site Monitor, Contractor shall attend TEP as a TEP test taker, at a testing site prescribed by DHHS, and note performance of test proctors and any environmental distractions. Monitor must complete and submit to the DHHS Contract Administrator, from two business days after the test, an evaluation of test proctor services on a form approved by DHHS. As a TEP Site Monitor, Contractor shall stay on site for at least 45 minutes.

8.3 ELIGIBLE POPULATION

BEI program test candidates will be determined in accordance with the established rules set forth in Chapter 109 of Title 40 of the Texas Administrative Code.

8.4 PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

HHSC will look solely to the Contractor(s) for the performance of all contractual obligations resulting from an award based on this OE.

No Contractor will be relieved of its obligations for any nonperformance by its subcontractors. Contractor must ensure that its subcontractors abide by all requirements, terms, and conditions of this Contract. Unless the context clearly indicates otherwise, every requirement and every prohibition set forth in this OE and any resulting contract that applies to a Contractor applies with equal force to its employees, agents, representatives, and subcontractors.

8.5 CONTRACTOR PERSONNEL PERFORMANCE

- A.** Contractor shall not employ or contract with or permit the employment of unfit or unqualified persons or persons not skilled in the tasks assigned to them.
- B.** Contractor shall at all times employ sufficient personnel to carry out functions and services in the manner and time prescribed by the Contract.

- C.** Contractor is responsible for the acts and omissions of the Contractor's employees, agents (including, but not limited to, lobbyists) and subcontractors and shall enforce strict discipline among the Contractor's employees, agents (including, but not limited to, lobbyists) and subcontractors performing the services under the Contract.
- D.** HHSC, at its sole discretion, may request in writing the immediate removal of any Contractor personnel or subcontractor personnel from the services being provided under the Contract. Upon such request, Contractor shall immediately remove the subject personnel and submit in writing to HHSC, within 10 calendar days of HHSC's request for removal, confirmation of the removal and assurance of continued, compliant Contract performance.

8.6 NOTICE OF CRIMINAL ACTIVITY

At the time of submission, Applicants shall provide confirmation that the Applicant, any person with ownership or controlling interest in Applicant, and Applicant's agents, employees, subcontractors and volunteers who will be providing the required services:

- a) have not engaged in any activity that does or could constitute a criminal offense equal to or greater than a Class A misdemeanor or grounds for disciplinary action by a state or federal regulatory authority; and
- b) have not been placed on community supervision, received deferred adjudication, or been indicted for or convicted of a criminal offense relating to involvement in any financial matter, federal or state program, or sex crime.

This is a continuing disclosure requirement; prior to Contract award, if any, Applicants must notify the HHSC Sole Point of Contact within five days of the date Applicant learns of actions set forth in subsections (a) and (b) above. Additionally, this is a continuing disclosure requirement for each Contractor, during the term of the Contract, to immediately report, in writing, to the HHSC contract manager when Contractor learns of or has any reason to believe it or any person with ownership or controlling interest in Contractor, or any of Contractor's agents, employees, subcontractors or volunteers has: engaged in any activity that does or could constitute a criminal offense equal to or greater than a Class A misdemeanor or grounds for disciplinary action by a state or federal regulatory authority; or been placed on community supervision, received deferred adjudication, or been indicted for or convicted of a criminal offense relating to the involvement in any financial matter, federal or state program, or sex crime.

Contractor shall not permit any person who engaged, or was alleged to have engaged, in any activity subject to reporting under this section to perform direct client services or have direct contact with clients, unless otherwise directed in writing by the HHSC contract manager.

HHSC, at its sole discretion, may terminate any Contract if Contractor, its agents, employees, subcontractors, or volunteers are arrested, indicted, or convicted of any criminal activity.

8.7 NOTICE OF INSOLVENCY OR INDEBTEDNESS

At the time of submission, Applicants shall provide with the Application detailed written descriptions of any insolvency, incapacity, and outstanding unpaid obligations of Applicant owed to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) or the State of Texas, or any agency or political subdivision of the State of Texas. This is a continuing disclosure requirement; prior to Contract award, if any, Applicants must notify the HHSC Sole Point of Contact within five days of the date Applicant learns of such financial circumstances after submission of the Application. Additionally, Contractors are under a continuing obligation to notify the HHSC contract manager, as applicable, within five days of the date Contractor learns of such financial circumstances after Contract award.

8.8 INVOICE REQUIREMENTS AND PAYMENT

8.8.1 INVOICE REQUIREMENTS

Contractor shall submit to HHSC a total invoice each month in accordance with the DHHS BEI rater rates and guidelines. Each invoice must be submitted by mail or email, in the format prescribed by HHSC, no later than the 10th calendar day of the month following the month in which services were completed.

The mailing address for submitting an invoice is:

Health and Human Services Commission
Attention: DHHS BEI Program
P.O. Box 12904
Austin, TX 78711

The email address for submitting an invoice is:

DHHS.BEI@hhs.texas.gov

The invoice must include, at a minimum:

- a) Contractor's legal name;

- b) Remit to address;
- c) Federal ID or Texas CPA Payee ID;
- d) Contractor's telephone number;
- e) Invoice number;
- f) Contract number;
- g) Description of services performed;
- h) Period covered in the invoice;
- i) Number of candidates evaluated during a scoring session;
- j) Number of hours worked for proctoring the TEP, ASL Proficiency, or TSP;
- k) Service rate; and
- l) Invoice total.

No payment will be made under a Contract without submission of detailed, accurate invoices submitted as outlined.

8.8.2 PAYMENT

HHSC determines when rating services are requested and HHSC determines which performance test candidate a contractor rates and which service to be provided. The Contract resulting from this open enrollment will be paid in accordance with the contract requirements stated below:

- a) \$30 for each candidate evaluated for OC:B, SEE or MSS certification.
- b) \$35 for each candidate evaluated for Basic certification.
- c) \$40 for each candidate evaluated for Level III-Intermediary, Level V-Intermediary, OC:V or OC:C.
- d) \$45 for each candidate evaluated for Advanced, Master, or Trilingual Advanced or Trilingual Master certification.
- e) \$47.50 for functioning as team leader for each candidate evaluated for certification.
- f) \$25 stipend per hour of training to be paid in 30-minute increments for raters and team leaders for attending the mandatory pre-rater training session prior to participating in scoring interpreter candidates.
- g) \$40 per hour for functioning as proctor services.
- h) \$150 per rater scoring session or pre-rater training for functioning as trainer.
- i) \$150 per TX BEI rater scoring session for functioning as data analyst; \$25 per BEI rater scoring session for functioning as data analyst for other states authorized to use TX BEI exam per licensing agreements with HHSC;
- j) \$600 per day for functioning as lead trainer.

- k) \$18.75 stipend per hour of training to be paid in 30-minute increments for attending any DHHS-mandated training, not to include the pre-rater training session, either annually or as needed.
- l) Raters and team leaders attending any DHHS-mandated training, not to include the pre-rater training session may in lieu of the stipend in accordance with Subsection 8.8.2(k), choose to accept approved continuing education units (CEUs) for the BEI rater training event in accordance with DHHS Services Manual Chapter 3, that is available online and can currently be accessed at: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/handbooks/office-deaf-hard-hearing-services-manual/chapter-3-standards-procedures-interpreter-continuing-education>.
- m) \$75 plus TEP proctor fee for functioning as a TEP site monitor.
- n) \$50 for each candidate evaluated for Court or Medical certification.
- o) \$52.50 for functioning as team leader for each candidate evaluated for Court or Medical certification.
- p) \$55 for each candidate evaluated for BEI CDI.
- q) \$57.50 for functioning as team leader for each candidate evaluated for BEI CDI.
- r) Reimbursement for travel for services in accordance with Textravel Reimbursement Rates.
- s) Overnight travel must be pre-approved in writing by DHHS. The amount of reimbursement for commercial airline fares shall not exceed the cost of the lowest available airfare between the Contractor's location and the HHSC location where the work will be performed. The Contractor must make a good faith effort to obtain the lowest available airfare.

8.9 DATA USE AGREEMENT (DUA)

By submitting an Application and, if applicable, signing a Contract resulting from this OE, Applicant agrees to the terms of Exhibit C (HHS Data Use Agreement version 8.5). The Applicant must complete, sign, and return with its Application Exhibit C-1 (HHS Data Use Agreement – Attachment 2 – Security and Privacy Inquiry (SPI)).

8.10 TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Submission of an Application in response to this OE constitutes acceptance of all terms and conditions attached to, referenced, or set forth in the OE. Applicant shall not submit additional or different terms and conditions.

Any term, condition, or other part of an Applicant's submitted application that has been rejected by HHSC, that is not accepted in writing by HHSC, or that

conflicts with applicable law, this OE, any resulting Contract, or applicable terms and conditions will not constitute part of the Contract.

8.11 STANDARDS OF CONDUCT FOR VENDORS

Pursuant to 1 TAC 391.405(a), contractors, respondents, and vendors interested in working with HHS are required to implement standards of conduct to apply to all matters involving, or related to, those solicitations and contract(s) between themselves and HHS. These standards must adhere to ethics requirements adopted in rule, in addition to any ethics policy, or code of ethics approved by the HHSC Executive Commissioner and must be at least as restrictive as those applicable to HHS personnel in the applicable ethics law and policy provisions.

The standards of conduct must include the ten standards of ethical conduct set forth in Section I of the HHS Ethics Policy and requirements to comply with ethical standards set forth in federal and state law (including, but not limited to, 1 TAC Chapter 391, Subchapter D).

The standards of conduct, together with the responsibilities and restrictions incorporated herein, also apply to subcontractors of contractors, respondents and vendors.

Standards of conduct of any contractor, respondent or vendor may be reviewed and/or audited by the State Auditor and HHSC. Additionally, pursuant to 1 TAC 391.405(a), HHS may examine a respondent's standards of conduct in the evaluation of a bid, offer, proposal, quote, or other applicable expression of interest in a proposed purchase of goods or services.

Any vendor or contractor that violates a provision of 1 TAC Chapter 391, Subchapter D may be barred from receiving future contracts or have an existing contract canceled. Additionally, HHSC may report the vendor's actions to the Comptroller of Public Accounts for statewide debarment, or law enforcement.

SECTION 9. HHSC CONTRACT ADMINISTRATION

HHSC will designate a Contract Manager and provide the manager's contact information to the Contractor.

After award of any Contract resulting from this OE, all communications related to the Contract will be processed through the designated Contract Manager. Additional requirements apply to legal notices which must be provided to the HHS Chief Counsel as well as the Contract Manager.

SECTION 10. CONFIDENTIAL OR PROPRIETARY INFORMATION

10.1 PUBLIC INFORMATION ACT

Applicant Requirements Regarding Disclosure

Applications and contracts are subject to the Texas Public Information Act (PIA), Chapter 552 of the Texas Government Code, and may be disclosed to the public upon request. Other legal authority also requires HHSC to post certain contracts and Applications on HHSC's website and to provide such information to the Legislative Budget Board for posting on its website.

Under the PIA, certain information is protected from public release. If Applicant asserts that information provided in its Application is exempt from disclosure under the PIA, Applicant must:

a. **Mark Original Application:**

- (1) Mark the original Application, on the top of the front page, the words "CONTAINS CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION" in large, bold, capitalized letters (the size of, or equivalent to, 12-point Times New Roman font or larger); and
- (2) Identify, adjacent to each portion of the Application that Applicant claims is exempt from public disclosure, the claimed exemption from disclosure (NOTE: no redactions are to be made in the original Application);

b. **Certify in Original Application – HHS Solicitation Affirmations version 2.6 (attached as Exhibit A to this OE):** certify, in the designated section of the HHS Solicitation Affirmations version 2.6, Applicant's confidential information assertion and the filing of its Public Information Act Copy; and

c. **Submit Public Information Act Copy of Application:** submit a separate "Public Information Act Copy" of the original Application (in addition to the original and all copies otherwise required under the provisions of this OE). The Public Information Act Copy must meet the following requirements:

- (1) The copy must be clearly marked as "Public Information Act Copy" on the front page in large, bold, capitalized letters (the size of, or equivalent to, 12-point Times New Roman font or larger);
- (2) Each portion Applicant claims is exempt from public disclosure must be redacted; and
- (3) Applicant must identify, adjacent to each redaction, the claimed exemption from disclosure. Each identification provided as required in this subsection (c) must be identical to those set forth in the original Application as required in subsection 10.1(a)(2), above. The only difference in required markings and information between the original

Application and the "Public Information Act Copy" of the Application will be redactions - which can only be included in the "Public Information Act Copy." There must be no redactions in the original Application.

By submitting an Application to this OE, Applicant agrees that, if Applicant does not mark the original Application, provide the required certification in the Solicitation Affirmations, and submit the Public Information Act Copy, Applicant's Application will be considered to be public information that may be released to the public in any manner including, but not limited to, in accordance with the Public Information Act, posted on HHSC's and/or DSHS's public website, and posted on the Legislative Budget Board's website.

If Applicants submit partial, but not complete, information suggesting inclusion of confidential information and failure to comply with the requirements set forth in this section, HHSC, in its sole discretion, reserves the right to (1) disqualify all Applicants that fail to fully comply with the requirements set forth in this section, or (2) to offer all Applicants that fail to fully comply with the requirements set forth in this section additional time to comply.

Applicant should not submit a Public Information Act Copy indicating that the entire Application is exempt from disclosure. Merely making a blanket claim that the entire Application is protected from disclosure because it contains any amount of confidential, proprietary, trade secret, or privileged information is not acceptable, and may make the entire Application subject to release under the PIA.

Applications should not be marked or asserted as copyrighted material. If Applicant asserts a copyright to any portion of its Application, by submitting an Application, Applicant agrees to reproduction and posting on public websites by the State of Texas, including HHSC and all other state agencies, without cost or liability.

HHSC will strictly adhere to the requirements of the PIA regarding the disclosure of public information. As a result, by participating in this OE process, Applicant acknowledges that all information, documentation, and other materials submitted in the Application in response to this OE may be subject to public disclosure under the PIA. HHSC does not have authority to agree that any information submitted will not be subject to disclosure. Disclosure is governed by the PIA and by rulings of the Office of the Texas Attorney General. Applicants are advised to consult with their legal counsel concerning disclosure issues resulting from this process and to take precautions to safeguard trade secrets

and proprietary or otherwise confidential information. HHSC assumes no obligation or responsibility relating to the disclosure or nondisclosure of information submitted by Applicants.

For more information concerning the types of information that may be withheld under the PIA or questions about the PIA, refer to the *Public Information Act Handbook* published by the Office of the Texas Attorney General, or contact the attorney general's Open Government Hotline at (512) 478-OPEN (6736) or toll-free at (877) 673-6839 (877-OPEN TEX). The *Public Information Act Handbook* may be accessed at:

<https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open-government/members-public>

10.2 APPLICANT WAIVER – INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

SUBMISSION OF ANY DOCUMENT TO ANY HHS AGENCY IN RESPONSE TO THIS OE CONSTITUTES AN IRREVOCABLE WAIVER, AND AGREEMENT BY THE SUBMITTING PARTY TO FULLY INDEMNIFY THE STATE OF TEXAS, HHSC FROM ANY CLAIM OF INFRINGEMENT BY HHSC REGARDING THE INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS OF THE SUBMITTING PARTY OR ANY THIRD PARTY FOR ANY MATERIALS SUBMITTED TO HHS BY THE SUBMITTING PARTY.

SECTION 11. BINDING OFFER

All Applications should be responsive to the OE as issued or amended through written and posted Addenda, not with any assumption that HHSC will negotiate any or all terms, conditions, or provisions of the OE. Furthermore, all Applications constitute binding offers. **Any Application that includes any type of disclaimer or other statement indicating that the Application submitted in response to this OE does not constitute a binding offer may be disqualified.**

SECTION 12. REQUIRED APPLICATION DOCUMENTS

All documentation listed below must be submitted for a complete Application. Applicant should provide the documentation in the same sequence as outlined below by using the item number(s) and title(s) as necessary.

<u>Documentation Required for Submission</u>
1. Exhibit A – HHS Solicitation Affirmations version 2.6 Must be completed and signed. Important Note: Applications received without the signed Exhibit A will be disqualified.
2. OE Addenda, if applicable - signed
3. Exhibit D – BEI Rater Application – completed and signed, including all requirements and documentation required under the application.

<p>4. Exhibit C – HHS Data Use Agreement version 8.5 and Exhibit C-1 – HHS Data Use Agreement – Attachment 2 – Security and Privacy Inquiry (SPI) – completed and signed</p>
<p>5. Minimum Qualifications – Reference Section 7 Required Experience: Provide documentation of demonstrated experience to confirm the Applicant meets the minimum requirements.</p>
<p>6. Former Employees of a Texas State Agency: Applicant must provide the following information regarding individuals that formerly worked for any Texas state agency and now work for Applicant or any of Applicant's subcontractors: Name Address Phone Number State agency for which Applicant previously worked Dates of employment for each identified state agency Any additional information requested by HHS regarding identified individuals must be provided by Applicant.</p>
<p>7. Notice of Insolvency or Indebtedness – Reference Section 8.7 Provide with the Application detailed written descriptions of any insolvency, incapacity, and outstanding unpaid obligations of Applicant owed to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) or the State of Texas, or any agency or political subdivision of the State of Texas.</p>
<p>8. Applicant Contact Information Titles of personnel for contact information: • Person Authorized to Sign Contract • Primary Contact for Questions Regarding Application • Financial Officer • Accounts Payable • Primary Contact for Contract Management • Alternate Contact for Contract Management Provide this information for each contact listed above: • Name and Title • Mailing Address • Phone Number • Email Address</p>
<p>9. Public Information Act Copy of Application, if applicable</p>

SECTION 13. APPLICATION SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

The Application must be submitted in accordance with this section and Section 12.
 The complete Application must be submitted to:

HHSC-DHHS Board for Evaluation of Interpreters (BEI)
 Email: dhhs.contracts@hhs.texas.gov

Each Applicant is solely responsible for ensuring its Application is submitted in accordance with all OE requirements and ensuring timely receipt by HHSC.

In no event will HHSC be responsible or liable for any delay or error in submission or delivery.

The Application must be submitted by email.

Applications submitted by facsimile, or any other method not specified in this OE, will NOT be accepted or considered.

13.1 EMAIL SUBMISSION

Each Applicant is solely responsible for ensuring its Application is submitted in accordance with all OE requirements, and ensuring timely email receipt by HHSC.

The Application, including all documentation outlined in Section 12, must be sent in its entirety in one or more emails.

In no event will HHSC be responsible or liable for any delay or error in delivery. Applications must be RECEIVED by HHSC before the OE period closes as identified in Schedule of Events, Section 1, or subsequent Addenda.

The email subject line should contain the OE number, title as indicated on the cover page and number of emails if more than one (e.g., Email 1 of #, etc.). The Applicant is solely responsible for ensuring that Applicant's complete electronic Application is sent to, and actually RECEIVED by HHSC at the proper destination server before the submission deadline.

The Application documentation must not be encrypted so as to prevent HHSC from opening the documents.

IMPORTANT NOTE: HHSC recommends a 10MB limit on each attachment. This may require Applicants to send multiple emails to HHSC at dhhs.contracts@hhs.texas.gov to ensure all documentation contained in an Application is received.

All documents should be submitted in Microsoft office® formats (Word® and Excel®, as applicable) or in a form that may be read by Microsoft office® software. Any documents with signatures shall be submitted as an Adobe® portable document format (pdf) file. HHSC is not responsible for documents that cannot be read or converted. Unreadable applications may be, in HHSC'S sole discretion, rejected as nonresponsive.

Please be aware Internet Service Providers may limit file sizes on outgoing emails; therefore, it is recommended Applications not contain graphics, pictures, letterheads, etc., which consume a lot of space. These typically include *.tif/*.tiff, *.gif, & *.bmp file extensions, but may use others, as well. HHSC's firewall virus protection runs at all times, so during times of new active virus alerts, incoming traffic may be delayed while virus software scans emails with attachments. HHSC takes no responsibility for emailed Applications that are captured, blocked, filtered, quarantined or otherwise prevented from reaching the proper destination server by any HHSC anti-virus or other security software.

Applicants may email the Point of Contact, Section 4.1 to request confirmation of receipt.

13.2 RECEIPT OF APPLICATION

All Applications become the property of HHSC upon receipt and will not be returned to Applicants.

HHSC will NOT be held responsible for any Application that is mishandled by the Applicant, any Applicant's delivery or mail service or for Applications sent by email that are captured, blocked, filtered, quarantined or otherwise prevented from reaching the proper destination server by any HHSC anti-virus or other security software.

Applications received after the OE Period closes will not be considered.

SECTION 14. SCREENING OF APPLICATIONS

Neither issuance of this OE nor retention of Applications constitutes a commitment on the part of HHSC to award a Contract. HHSC maintains the right to reject any or all Applications and to cancel this OE if HHSC, in its sole discretion, considers it to be in the best interests of HHSC to do so.

Submission and retention of Applications by HHSC confers no legal rights upon any Applicant.

HHSC reserves the right to select qualified Applicants to this OE with or without discussion of the Applications with Applicants. It is understood by Applicant that all Applications, contracts, and related documents are subject to the Texas Public Information Act.

14.1 INITIAL SCREENING OF APPLICATIONS

An initial screening of Applications will be conducted by HHSC to determine which Applications are deemed to be responsive and qualified for further consideration for award. This screening includes a review to determine that each Applicant meets the minimum requirements, qualifications and each Application includes all required documentation.

HHSC reserves the right to:

- a. Ask questions or request clarification from any Applicant at any time during the OE and screening process, and
- b. Conduct studies and other investigations as necessary to evaluate any Application.

Informalities:

HHSC reserves the right to waive minor informalities in an Application. A “minor informality” is an omission or error that, in HHSC’s determination if waived or modified when screening Applications, would not give an Applicant an unfair advantage over other Applicants or result in a material change in the Application or OE requirements.

HHSC, at its sole discretion, may give an Applicant the opportunity to submit missing information or make corrections. The missing information or corrections must be submitted to the Point of Contact email address in Section 4.1 by the deadline set by HHSC. Failure to respond before the deadline may result in HHSC’s rejecting the Application and the Applicant not being considered for award.

Note: Any disqualifying factor set forth in this OE does not constitute an informality (e.g., Exhibit A (HHS Solicitation Affirmations version 2.6) which must be signed and submitted with the Application).

14.2 VERIFICATION OF PAST VENDOR PERFORMANCE

HHSC reserves the right to conduct studies and other investigations as necessary to evaluate any Application. By submitting an Application, the Applicant generally releases from liability and waives all claims against any party providing information about the Applicant at the request of HHSC.

Applicants may be rejected as a result of unsatisfactory past performance under any contract(s) as reflected in vendor performance reports, reference checks, or other sources.

An Applicant’s past performance may be considered in the initial screening process and prior to making an award determination.

Reasons for which an Applicant may be denied a contract include but are not limited to:

- a. Applicant has an unfavorable report or grade on the CPA Vendor Performance Tracking System (VPTS). VPTS may be accessed at:
<https://comptroller.texas.gov/purchasing/programs/vendor-performance-tracking/>
OR,
- b. Applicant is currently under a corrective action plan through HHSC, OR,
- c. Applicant has had repeated, negative vendor performance reports for the same reason, OR,
- d. Applicant has a record of repeated non-responsiveness to vendor performance issues, OR,
- e. Applicant has contracts or purchase orders that have been cancelled in the previous 12 months for non-performance or sub-standard performance.

In addition, HHSC may examine other sources of vendor performance which may include information provided by any governmental entity, whether an agency or political subdivision of the State of Texas, another state, or the Federal government.

The performance information may include, but is not limited to:

- Notices of termination,
- Cure notices,
- Assessments of liquidated damages,
- Litigation,
- Audit reports, and
- Non-renewals of contracts.

Further, HHSC, at its sole discretion, may initiate investigations or examinations of vendor performance based upon media reports. Any negative findings, as determined by HHSC in its sole discretion, may result in HHSC's removing the Applicant from further consideration for award.

SECTION 15. AWARD PROCESS

15.1 CONTRACT AWARD AND EXECUTION

HHSC, at its sole discretion, reserves the right to cancel this OE at any time or decline to award any Contracts as a result of this OE.

HHSC intends to award one or more Contracts as a result of this OE.

All awards are contingent upon approval of the HHSC Executive Commissioner or the HHSC Executive Commissioner's designee.

15.2 COMPLIANCE FOR PARTICIPATION IN STATE CONTRACTS

15.2.1 REQUIRED PRE-AWARD VERIFICATIONS

In addition to the initial screening process, the following verification checks are required to be conducted for each Applicant to determine compliance for participating in State contracts.

The Applicant's Legal Name and, if applicable, Assumed Business Name (D.B.A.) will be used to conduct these checks.

Applicants found to be barred, prohibited, or otherwise excluded from contract award will be disqualified from further consideration.

A. State of Texas Debarment

Must not be debarred from doing business with the State of Texas through the Comptroller of Public Accounts (CPA):
<https://comptroller.texas.gov/purchasing/programs/vendor-performance-tracking/debarred-vendors.php>

B. System of Award Management (SAM) Exclusions List - Federal

Must not be excluded from contract participation at the federal level. This verification is conducted through SAM, official website of the U.S. Government which may be accessed at:
<https://sam.gov/>.

Note: If the link does not work, copy/paste the link into browser bar.

C. Divestment Statute Lists

Must not be listed on the Divestment Statute Lists provided by CPA which may be accessed at:
<https://comptroller.texas.gov/purchasing/publications/divestment.php>

1. Companies that boycott Israel;
2. Scrutinized Companies with Ties to Sudan;
3. Scrutinized Companies with Ties to Iran;
4. Designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations; and

5. Scrutinized Companies with Ties to Foreign Terrorist Organizations.

D. HHS Office of Inspector General

Must not be listed on the HHS Office of Inspector General Texas Exclusions List for people or businesses excluded from participating as provider: <https://oig.hhsc.state.tx.us/oigportal2/Exclusions>.

E. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Must not be listed on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General's List of Excluded Individuals/Entities (LEIE), excluded participation as provider, unless a valid waiver is currently in effect (see <https://exclusions.oig.hhs.gov/>).

15.2.2 ADDITIONAL REQUIRED PRE-AWARD VERIFICATIONS

After the checks performed in Section 15.2.1, the following verifications will be conducted for each Applicant. The verifications will be based on the legal name and, if applicable, the Assumed Business Name (D.B.A.), and/or the Secretary of State (SOS) charter number, the Federal ID or Texas Payee ID numbers, or the CPA Franchise Tax number provided, as applicable, on Exhibit A (HHS Solicitation Affirmations version 2.6).

The results of the checks below will be used to further consider an Applicant for award and may result in disqualification.

A. Texas Franchise Tax Status

The Texas franchise tax is a privilege tax imposed on each taxable entity formed or organized in Texas or doing business in Texas. Although not all entities are required to file or pay franchise taxes, HHSC will process a search of the Applicant through the CPA Franchise Tax system to verify the Applicant is in good standing.

Franchise tax checks may reveal as to applicable entities (1) debts or delinquencies owed to the state (implicating contracting limitations) and (2) forfeiture of the right to transact business in Texas.

B. Texas Warrant Hold Status

The check for warrant holds through the CPA is required to determine if an Applicant is on hold for any reason. Section 2252.903 of the Texas Government Code requires agencies to verify the warrant hold status no earlier than the seventh day before and no later than the day of contract execution for transactions involving a written contract. In accordance with Section 3.3 of Exhibit B (HHS Uniform Terms and Conditions – Vendor version 3.4), payments under any contract resulting from this OE will be applied directly toward eliminating the Applicant's debt or delinquency regardless of when it arises.

15.3 AWARD TO GOVERNMENTAL ENTITIES

If Applicant is a governmental entity, responding to this OE in its capacity as a governmental entity, certain terms and conditions may not be applicable including, but not limited to, any HSP requirement. Furthermore, to the extent permitted by law, if an Application is received from a governmental entity, HHSC reserves the right to enter into an interagency or interlocal agreement with the governmental entity.

SECTION 16. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTED PARTIES

Subject to certain specified exceptions, Section 2252.908 of the Texas Government Code, Disclosure of Interested Parties, applies to a contract of a state agency that has a value of at least \$1 million or that is for services that would require a person to register as a lobbyist under Chapter 305 or that requires an action or vote by the governing body of the agency before the contract may be signed. One of the requirements of Section 2252.908 is that a business entity (defined as "any entity recognized by law through which business is conducted, including a sole proprietorship, partnership, or corporation") must submit a Form 1295, Certificate of Interested Parties, to the state agency at the time the business entity submits the signed contract to the agency.

Applicant represents and warrants that, if selected for award of a contract as a result of this OE, Applicant will submit to HHSC, if applicable, a Certificate of Interested Parties at the time Applicant submits the signed contract. Form 1295 involves an electronic process through the Texas Ethics Commission (TEC).

Information regarding the on-line process for completing Form 1295 is currently available on the Texas Ethics Commission's website (<https://ethics.state.tx.us/filinginfo/1295/>).

For further information:

Reference Section 2252.908 of the Texas Government Code which can currently be accessed at:

<https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/GV/htm/GV.2252.htm#2252.908>.

Title 1, Chapter 46, Disclosure of Interested Parties of the Texas Administrative Code which can currently be accessed at:

<https://ethics.state.tx.us/rules/commission/ch46.php>.

If the potential awardee does not timely submit a completed, certified and signed TEC Form 1295 to HHSC, HHSC is prohibited by law from executing a contract, even if the potential awardee is otherwise eligible for award.

SECTION 17. LIST OF EXHIBITS

The following documents are attached to this OE and their terms are hereby incorporated into any Contract awarded as a result of this OE.

- Exhibit A – HHS Solicitation Affirmations version 2.6
- Exhibit B – HHS Uniform Terms and Conditions – Vendor version 3.4
- Exhibit C – HHS Data Use Agreement version 8.5
- Exhibit C-1 –HHS Data Use Agreement – Attachment 2 – Security and Privacy Inquiry (SPI)
- Exhibit D – BEI Rater Application