

US Agency for Global Media

Questions and Answers Localization Services

- 1- What is the end use of the videos? Will they be posted online and for how long?

The videos will be broadcast by VOA on all possible mediums ranging from digital, OTT streaming (social media, YouTube), terrestrial TV, and so forth. Most will be posted online indefinitely.

- 2- Are these videos paid advertisements or unpaid?

Our videos are not monetized. They are not advertisements and will not have advertisements run over them.

- 3- Can you provide past volumes of subtitling needed for videos per month per language, i.e. Dari 50 minutes, Kinyarwanda 10 minutes?

It is not possible to provide exact volumes per language per month. We generally produce four short documentaries per month with each documentary being around 10-20 minutes long. Occasionally a feature-length documentary (30 to 70 minutes) will also need versioning.

- 4- Are you able to provide the name of the incumbent and the current rates?

There is no incumbent. This is a new requirement.

- 5- Have you had any issues with the current incumbent?

N/A

- 6- Can we use linguists based outside the US for the transcription and subtitling?

Yes.

- 7- How will the volume of the material be submitted throughout the year?

BPA call will be competed among BPA holders that will include information as to the details and size of the translation task.



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- 8- We normally do not include On Screen Text in the subtitles, or we include this where it does not conflict with Voice Over. How Does USAGM expect this text to be handled?

On Screen Text translation should be translated permitted it does not conflict with character's speaking subtitles.

- 9- USAGM mentions both SRT and VTT in the RFP. Does USAGM expect both formats? In some instances, only SRT is listed. Please clarify?

Both SRT and VTT will be permitted depending on the vendor's preference and workflow.

- 10- Does USAGM only require the Transcription of the source language (English) of the video only, or do you also want a transcript of the translations as well?

Only an English transcription will be required for each video regardless of the target language. For instance, if the Target language is Farsi, the contractor is required to provide the English transcription only and not the Farsi transcription. See section 3.1 of the SOW for details.

- 11- USAGM mentions they will review the translations but won't pay for revisions. Please clarify what you will be looking to update during the revision process. I.e. will you be making subjective edits to the translation or flag objective errors (i.e. timing) in the SRT/VTT?

Our language programming staff will review the translations and the files and will point out errors that need correcting both in the translation and timing errors.

- 12- USAGM states Contractors shall create an English-language transcription for each video and will deliver one set of English transcriptions in Microsoft Word format to VOA (in addition to the order's translated subtitles). The transcriptions should be time-stamped. In cases where the film's source language is English, an English transcription and English subtitles will still be required. Question: Does this mean that regardless of the language pair we always need to provide English?

Correct. English transcriptions and subtitles will always be required.

- 13- USAGM states the film's source language may be any of the languages listed in the required Appendix A (with Appendix B as optional). Target subtitle translations may also be any language from required Appendix A (with languages in Appendix B as



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optional). Question: Does this mean USAGM may be asking us to create subtitles from one foreign language to another i.e Korean into Farsi?

Correct. Still the English transcription is required. For instance, if the video originally in Korean language and the target language is Arabic, the contractor is required to provide English transcription and the Arabic subtitle.

- 14- Please can you clarify under the languages if Mandarin is needed for Taiwan or Mainland China as the dialects are different?

Both dialects may be required.

- 15- Please clarify that Persian is needed for Farsi (Iran)?

Yes, Persian is needed for Farsi

- 16- Please clarify that Bangla is Bengali?

Bengali is meant for Bangla.

- 17- USAGM mentions expertise with handling multiple overlapping speakers. Can USAGM provide an example of what they are referring to?

We mean here that the vendor should be aware that our videos sometimes have fast-paced dialogue where multiple individuals talk simultaneously and over each other and that that is an example of why we require evidence of human-expertise as opposed to purely AI or machine-based translations.

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- 18- Will all the videos received be initially English? We can and do already assist your team with videos that are received in other languages, however such videos will require additional processes for this assignment (compared to English language videos). As example, they will need to first be translated to English for the English transcript. We currently assume that only English language videos are included in the contract at this time?



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No, some video's source language will be in languages other than English.

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19- Should we provide an English SRT file for all videos?

Currently this is an option, so we assume it may only be required for some videos. English subtitle files will be required for all videos.

20- The English transcript – Do you have a particular style guide for the English transcript?

We ask as the creation of a SRT subtitle file does not require speakers to be identified, though this might be requested for the transcript.

We currently assume that it will be unnecessary to identify speakers in the transcript as the reader will be able to follow the transcript/identify speakers using the timecodes provided in the transcript?

We do have a style guide for our transcripts and subtitles and that will be shared with vendors upon award.

21- The RFP states "Translation assignments will be calculated on a per minute basis only."

Does this mean you require charges to be calculated based on the number of minutes in the source video, and that the per-minute charge must include all transcription, time stamp creation, and translation?

Yes. As specified in 3.4 of the SOW, the contractor shall provide English-language transcription along with the translated subtitles for the targeted languages (refer to the SOW for details).

22- Is it acceptable to charge separately for transcription, time stamp creation, and translation?

NO, must be included in one package.

23- Is it acceptable to charge for transcription and time stamp creation based on the number of hours needed to perform the work?

NO, must be included

24- Is it acceptable to charge for translation on a per-word basis?

NO, the translation is per minute.



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- 25- The RFP states "The government will not pay for revisions. The government will only pay for the final version accepted." Does this pertain only to the corrections of errors (should they occur in the original delivered translation? Or does it also pertain to subjective, i.e. preferential, changes that may be requested?

This refers to errors in translation and meaning pointed out by our language service staff as well as any errors in adhering to the style's guide.

- 26- "The RFP states "Service Request Confirmation: due within 24 hours of request with confirmation sent via e-mail to requestor." Does the 24 hours include weekends and holidays, or can it be understood to mean 1 business day?

This should be understood to mean 1 business day.

- 27- What is the location and education level for the target audiences of the sample translation?

The audiences of our videos are native speakers, and locals of the regions in which those languages are spoken or diaspora communities around the world. Farsi-language videos, for example, target all Farsi speakers in Iran and abroad of all education levels.

- 28- How many hours of video do you typically have translated in a year?

Up to now, there is no typical amount of translations performed in a year.

- 29- When does the current contract end?

There is no current contract.

- 30- What is your historical spend for written translation?

N/A

- 31- What is the anticipated contract value for this contract?

N/A



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32- How much did your organization spend on written translation in 2022?

Not available

33- Who is/are your current incumbent(s) for translation services?

There is no incumbent.

34- Does the USAGM anticipate call orders that require multilingual localization and translation services, or is it anticipated that orders will largely request translation of English transcripts into one or two target languages?

The call orders will vary between non-English videos that require translation into English and other non-English languages and English videos that require translation into one or multiple other languages.

35- Is there an incumbent currently performing this work? If so, could the USAGM provide the name of the contractor, BPA number and the approximate BPA value to date?

There is no incumbent.

36- On the Excel pricing spreadsheet, could the USAGM please clarify if the English line item is intended for pricing of **transcription services (per minute)**? In other words, can the USAGM confirm that there will be a separate transcription cost that is "into English" and that there will be no need to transcribe any foreign content and then translate that content into English as the target language?

The contractor must provide English transcription regardless of the target language, then the contractor will do the translation and subtitle as specified in the technical part of the SOW.

37- Is there a historic or projected volume of translation(s) that will be required by target language? Moreover, it is anticipated that there will be more of a need for translation into any one language or group of languages in **Appendix A**?



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There is not a historic or projected volume of translation required by target language. All languages in Appendix A may be equally required for call orders.

38- How will the translated subtitles be displayed on the video?

The subtitles will appear at the bottom of the screen – the VOA language programming staff will insert the delivered SRT/VTT files into the videos.

39- Are there character limitations for display purposes?

Yes, 40 characters per line.

40- Are there time-length limitation for each subtitle segment?

7 seconds maximum per subtitle on screen 5/6th of a second minimum per subtitle event E.g. 20 frames for 24fps

41- Do you require speaker identification?

In general, no, but in some cases, it may be necessary for clarity.

42- Appendix A shows a list of 23 primary languages, is the volume the same for all languages?

The volume will vary from language to language depending on interest and needs of each language departments.

43- Are all documentaries and videos in English language? Are there videos that may be in foreign language?

Videos may be in a foreign language and will require transcriptions and subtitles in to English

44- Do some of the videos come with multiple languages spoken?

Yes, some videos may have a combination of several languages.

45- What does a typical order look like under this BPA?



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See statement of work.

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46- Will there be confidential content to be transcribed? Are all content files publicly available?

All government property is subject to confidentiality

47- Will there be the need for descriptive Subtitles for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (SDH)?

- a. When transcribing nonverbal or ambient audio, these should be concise yet detailed descriptions that illustrate the audible sounds and/or spontaneous reactions that are integral to the overall storytelling. Example:
<https://youtu.be/DeCBgZGXTug?t=353>
- b. Explain the audio and sounds, not visual elements or actions.
- c. Though important that audio transcriptions in subtitles are detailed and descriptive, dialogue transcriptions always take precedence over these. If the audio competes with dialogue, only subtitle/transcribe the plot-pertinent content.

48- Will orders come in on short notice? If so, can some room for flexibility be expected on the delivery date(s)?

See Statement of Work. If expedited delivery is required, it will be outlined in the call order.

49- Can we expect the need to censor the transcription and/or subtitles in the event of explicit or sensitive speech?

Yes, explicit and sensitive speech will need to be censored.

50- How will the deadlines be specifically defined in accordance with the order(s) size/volume?

In extraordinary cases where a large volume is required, new deadlines may be negotiated with the vendor.

51- Can we expect feedback on deliveries, and if so, how will that process take place?

VOA Language Service staff will review the first draft and provide feedback on each order.

52- In ref. to the sample video at the moment of the proposal submission, do you have additional specifications? Length? # of languages?



See Statement of Work for more details.

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53- The test asks for Spanish. Our assumption is that you require neutral Spanish but we wanted to double check to be safe.

We prefer Spanish as spoken in Latin America (Venezuela, etc)

54- Will 100% of the content have both draft and final video versions? If not, can you estimate the percentage of titles that have both draft and final?

There are draft versions of videos, but the localization firm will receive only final video versions.

55- Do you provide change logs listing the differences between the draft and final video versions?

Final subtitles will be the corrected, improved version of the draft subtitles after they are reviewed by the language service staff.

56- Is it possible to estimate roughly how many short, feature-length documentary films, explainer-like videos, and investigative stories there are in an average year?

This is not possible at the moment.

57- What platform will you be using to QC the subtitles? We ask because it's helpful to understand if your tool is using SMPTE or Media timecode (for example)?

We do not currently use any one specific tool for subtitle QC.

58- Would you be interested in having access to our secure cloud platform to handle the QCs?

Potentially yes.

59- Can the English transcription be an English captioning file saved as a Word document? To expand on this, we would create an SRT file of the English source video as a base for the translation of subtitles. We call that a caption file, we can save that as a Word document. Said document would contain the transcribed content and in and out timecodes. Can that serve as the English transcription described in the SOW. If not, can you provide a sample/template of a transcription



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file that would comply with this requirement.

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Correct.

60- Are the translations always into or out of English or would there be a requirement to translate a non-English source video into a non-English target language?

There will be non-English source videos that will need translating into a non-English target language.

61- If the source language is not English would a source transcript in Word also be required?

Yes, but just in English.

62- Can the pricing table be modified? Rates for English as a target language will vary depending on the source language and that requires its own separate rate list.

No, we cannot modify the table.

63- Would you expect the English transcription rate to be built into the target languages per minute rates?

YES

64- It seems the selected vendor will provide the SRT/VVT files for the translated subtitles, will the selected vendor be involved with the quality assurance process after the subtitles are embedded before release?

No, not after they are embedded.

65- Will the government provide access to Frame.io account or the vendor need to have subscription to access the software?

Yes, the government will provide access.

What is the expected turnaround time for the task in average? See SOW delivery schedule

66- How often would requests be made for source languages that other than English to be translated into non-English target languages?

On a regular basis



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67- Would it be possible to provide per minute rates on captions/transcription in SRT/VTT and then, a per word rate for the translation of the subtitles? Or does VOA need a single per minute rate to include all services for completing the tasks?

Per minute rate only for completing the tasks

68- Would the offerors have access to Style Guides, Glossaries or any specific instructions that can be used for our reference for the sample transcription?

These will be available upon awarding of the BPA.

69- Regarding the Sample task for Spanish, could you please specify the target audience/region? (USA, LATAM, Spain, etc.)

LATAM

70- Regarding the Sample task for Farsi, could you please specify the target audience/region? (Iran, Iraq, etc.)

Iran and Iranian diaspora

71- The instructions to the PPQ (Past Performance Questionnaire) indicate that the Contractor shall ... "forward this form to their clients and request that their clients complete it... and send it via email to Hfaisal (...)" We understand this to mean that Supertext's clients completing the form on Supertext's behalf shall email their completed form directly to Government and NOT return the form to Supertext. Please confirm our understanding is correct.

That's right. The client completing the form and send it via email directly to the Contracting officer. Also, the company have a choice of providing CPARS. Keep in mind the references have to be from different contracts not the same contract with three different references. For instance, contract #8475-54-XXXX only one reference can fill out the form not three references from the same contract.

72- We understand "Persian" language to refer to the language also commonly known as "Farsi" (ISO 639-2 language code 'fa'); please confirm.



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Correct.

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73- Can you specify which countries are indicated when referring to the required language "French/Africa" and "Portuguese/Africa" should be considered? In our experience, French (and to a lesser extent, Portuguese) dialects spoken in Africa vary from country to country, which could have important regional implications in the translations.

VOA French to Africa broadcasts to the 20+ Francophone countries in Africa.

VOA Portuguese to Africa broadcasts to the six Portuguese-speaking countries on the continent.

Videos may originate from any of these regions.

74- In the SOW under 5.1.6 Human Translated, it states 5.1.6-Human Translated: Deliverables will be translated by human translators, with minimal assistance from machine-assisted software systems that yield errors and miss nuances in the language. Our experience has shown that substantial efficiencies to transcription and subtitling process can be gained under certain conditions with the use of technological advances including AI-powered systems. When such aids do not compromise the overall quality and cultural relevance/market appropriateness of the translations, we would like to be able to utilize these in our process and will make reference to such in our Technical Proposal, if allowable. Can you provide more detail on what might be permitted under this clause and what types of technical innovations would be excluded, if any? Our use of technology is always in service of efficiencies that support the overall project goals but which do not degrade translation fluency and cultural appropriateness.

Human expertise must be involved to ensure that idiomatic phrasing or cultural references in spoken speech are captured and understood in the translating process. To the extent that machine-assisted translations can enhance efficiency without compromising quality, they are welcome.

75- As we understand that videos may be in English OR any of the languages listed in Appendix A, we would like to obtain further information about the breakdown of source language videos across these languages. Can more detail be provided about the distribution of languages / frequency of non-English source languages that should be expected?

No information is available about the frequency of source languages in our videos.



76- there a minimum turnaround time expected by the USAGM? The turnaround time will be specified in call order level. However, the bidder need to specify the turnaround time for 60 minutes from their prior experience.

That's the company estimation.

77- Will the sample video subtitles be evaluated as part of the Technical adjectival rating, or on a Pass/Fail basis?

As a part of the technical capability.

78- Could the Government please provide an editable .docx file for the PPQ to allow Offerors and Clients to expand text boxes and provide the necessary project descriptions?

The PPQ form is editable and they can add extra page, if needed.

79- In order to provide a balanced evaluation of all Offeror submissions, would the USAGM please provide their preferred format for the transcriptions?

In a word document. See the SOW, Technical part for details.

80- Please confirm that Offerors should submit each Volume as a separate file?

Yes, as indicated in the solicitation.

81- Please confirm the cover page and Table of Contents are not included in the page counts for Volume I and II.

Follow the PROPOSAL FORMAT in the solicitation.

82- Will the Government provide login credentials to their preferred method of video review and collaboration after award, or should Offerors propose a platform for use?

The government will provide that.



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83- Please confirm Offerors are not required to submit pricing for “Potential Languages” found in SOW Appendix 9, until after contract award.

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Only for the list on languages in the excel sheet

84- The rate card provided by VOA (Transcription Translation per minute.xlsx) suggests the rates SDL is expected to provide is for per minute transcription and translation of English source content into the target languages outlines. If the source language is not English, how does VOA want SDL to provide rates? I.e., the rate for English > Spanish is different for Spanish > English.

Vendors should provide the rate information as requested in the RFP. SOW states clearly that some films will have non-English source languages that require translation of subtitles into English and into other non-English languages. Vendors should be able to provide rates using this rate card that capture subtitle translation tasks that go from one non-English language to another non-English language.

85- Is BBG looking for us to add Subtitles or do they want Closed Captioning with name identifiers ,music and sound effects listed.
Please see the technical part for details.

86- 86- Would there ever be a scenario where English is neither the source nor target language? I.e., French > Spanish or Bahasa > Indonesian, etc.

Yes, still English transcription is required. English will always be at least one of the target languages for a video with a non-English source language.

87- Can we utilize CONUS and OCONUS-based linguist and transcription resources? Your response was that the contractor will be able to use translators and transcribers regardless of whether they are CONUS or OCONUS?

Yes.

88- Are there any certification or proficiency requirements for the transcribers and translators who will be performing the work? Your response was that VOA there are no formal requirements and that VOA is concerned with deliverables and outcomes (products).

Correct.