

Questions & Answers

North Dakota Judicial Branch
Request For Proposals 180-2025-01
Transcription Services

Responses Posted 11/14/2025
Updated and reposted on 11/24/2025
Updated and reposted on 11/28/2025

Q. What is the current per page rate paid by the state for transcription services?

A. The current per page rates are:

- To prepare an Expedited transcript (14 or fewer days): \$4.25/page
- To prepare a Standard transcript (within 60 days of request): \$3.25/page
- Copy of completed transcript: 75 cents per page

Note that “preparation of transcript” includes an original to be filed with the clerk of court and one electronic copy for each party represented and, if applicable one electronic copy for the North Dakota Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation division of parole and probation.

Q. Are Partial bids permitted? For example, may a proposal be submitted for specific services (translation/transcription) or language only?

A. Partial bids will not be accepted. The Court is pursuing a comprehensive contract with a single vendor to provide all requested services.

Q. Are certified services or transcripts required for all work described in the scope of services?

A. Certification that the transcript is from an official court recording is required as described in Appendix D of the Request for Proposal.

Q. May freelancers or independent contractors be engaged to perform any portion of the work?

A. Subcontracting work to freelance transcriptionists or independent contractors is allowed but must be disclosed within the bid. A vendor utilizing freelance transcriptionists or independent contractors must contractually agree to be responsible for their work product and payment for services, and to indemnify the State of North Dakota against any action brought against a third-party transcript preparer contracted by the vendor.

Q. May translators or project personnel work outside the United States if all data is encrypted and handled in compliance with HIPAA and NYC PII Rules?

A. Project personnel may work outside the U.S. if disclosed in the bid and data is sufficiently encrypted and held in compliance with all applicable federal and North Dakota state laws. This proposal does not contemplate the need for translators.

- Q. Is a state-issued business or professional license required for these services?**
- A. There is no state-issued license required for transcriptionist. Section II (N) of the Request for Proposals lists the minimum qualifications for transcribers, which includes certification through the American Association of Electronic Reporters (AAERT) or demonstrated equivalent. As noted in section II (M) of the Request for Proposals, all vendors must be eligible to do business with the State of North Dakota. The requirements for registering as a vendor and for doing business in North Dakota are listed on the North Dakota Office of Management and Budget website and the website for the North Dakota Secretary of State.
- Q. May proposers use AI-assisted or CAT tools that include machine-translation functionality if human post-editing and encryption are applied?**
- A. Yes, as long as the AI tool is within a closed, private system so no personal-identifying information (PII) or confidential information is released.
- Q. On a normal basis, how many points of contact will be uploading audio files?**
- A. We have 8 judicial districts and 1 supreme court. Because they each have their own procedure for responding to requests for transcripts. There may be more than one person in each of these offices that will be uploading audio files.
- Q. What is the quality of the audio files? Are all audio files relatively the same quality?**
- A. All audio files are considered high quality. Every courtroom uses the same digital audio system and integrated sound system, although the style and type of microphone may vary.
- Q. May I contact a current North Dakota employee to determine his or her interest in working with my company as a freelance or contract employee without violating the collusion clause?**
- A. You may contact a current employee to discuss a future employment option. The conversation may not include any exchange of information intended to provide one bidder an advantage over another and the employee may not provide any assistance in drafting or reviewing the bidder's proposal.
- Q. For audio (page 7, Section C) – we are to notify the trial court within one business day of receipt that a deposit has been received – since you are requiring our system to notify the Court automatically upon receipt of payment – can we just add all deposits received manually into our system, even if not electronically submitted into our system, so to not have to send separate emails? We can streamline the process so when you receive the notification of deposit, you receive a link to our system where you can upload the audio and log notes, witness and exhibit logs, and any other relevant materials needed to that proper folder.**
- A. We have no preference for how a vendor handles the back-end of transactions.
- Q. (Page 8, Section H) How often will there be case materials that will need to be mailed back to the court – and how do we get them in the first place?**

- A. We believe it will be rare to have to work from an analog tape and paper documents since these would only be used for transcripts from proceedings held prior to 2005. In the event that this is needed, the documents and tape would be shipped to the vendor through priority mail, return receipt required and the vendor would be expected to return the documents and tape in that fashion.
- Q. **(Page 10, Section M) Minimum requirements for transcription services – established quality control procedures for producing near zero inaudible/indiscernible – do you want this written out and included, or just noted in the proposal?**
- A. The vendor’s quality control procedures should be clearly explained in the written proposal.
- Q. **(Page 10, Section M) Same with “established procedure for reviewing and comparing transcripts with audio and producing and filing correcting sheets as necessary.”**
- A. The vendor’s quality control procedures should include a protocol for reviewing and comparing the written transcript with the audio, and a process for filing a corrected transcript if the transcript has already been released after an error or omission is noted. This protocol should be clearly explained in the written proposal.
- Q. **(Page 10, Section M) For established and reliable media upload and transcript delivery process – we use BOX.com – is that acceptable?**
- A. Yes, as long as the vendor maintains proper licensing and security for the product.
- Q. **(Page 10, Section M) Established billing and collection system – we have an established billing system. Our collection process is done by people. Can you elaborate as to what you are requiring?**
- A. We are requiring the vendor to have a billing system and collection system already in place which minimizes any delays in being able to start, finish or file a transcript due to non-payment or mail delays for checks or other non-electronic means of payment.
- Q. **(Page 10, Section M) For “robust web-based software for accepting requests, uploading media and document files, transmitting document and accepting payments) does this need to be one system or can it be a few systems?**
- A. From the court side, we prefer a single portal in which all necessary transactions can be completed. The architecture of the back-end of the portal is at the discretion of the vendor.
- Q. **(Page 11, Section N) Certification through the American Association of Electronic Reporters or demonstrated equivalent. Selected bidder shall explain the minimum qualifications for transcribers. We put our transcriptionists through our own training, testing and continuing education. What would you like us to provide, or is stating this sufficient?**
- A. It is the responsibility of the bidder to provide enough explanation and detail to show that their custom training is equivalent to the AAERT certification.

Q. (Page 21, Section E) If you are choosing one vendor – what are you looking for in a vendor.

A. The court would like to contract with a single vendor who can meet the requirements outlined in the RFP and do so at a reasonable price for the transcript.

Q. (Page 6, paragraph 4) It seems pricing is already established – are you looking to replace those prices? Was that from a previous contract?

A. The court system has set the per-page rate for transcripts through adoption of Policy 206 at \$3.25 per page for preparation of regular transcripts and \$4.25 per page for expedited (14 day or less) transcripts. As defined in that policy, preparation includes an electronic copy for all parties. A copy fee cannot be charged for electronic copies. These are the rates currently established for a court reporter or other individual or entity employed by the court system. The court system currently provides state employees all equipment necessary to capture and transcribe the record. It is understood that a private vendor will supply their own equipment and supplies and prices will reflect those costs.

The private vendor we currently use for approximately one-half of the transcript requests honors those rates.

Q. (Page 21, Section E) Are pricing for third parties also established or if someone wants something quicker, can we charge more – should we create more boxes for each turnaround time?

A. Third parties pay the rate set by Policy 206. It is understood that most vendors will have a wider range of options and services than the court currently provides. All bidders should include a table that includes all rates they charge for services.

Q. Are there any third-party requestors who need to purchase the transcripts? What are you currently paying for this service?

A. Unless prohibited by court order, transcripts of publicly-accessible proceedings may be purchased by an interested individual, independent of any appeal process or connection to the case. Third parties currently pay \$3.25/page for preparation of a regular transcript and \$4.25/page for expedited transcripts.

Q. Are you happy with your current vendor? Where is there room for improvement?

A. The court currently uses a mixture of state employees and private vendors to prepare transcripts from audio and steno records. As of January 1, 2026, we will only be capturing the record in audio format. Contracting with a single, private vendor for transcripts will create consistency and oversight of the process and make it easier for parties and the public to order and pay for transcripts. It will also eliminate the requirement of the court to continue to invest in stenographic reporting equipment and software.

Q. Who is the current vendor, what is the contract # and what is the contract amount?

- A. The court currently uses a mix of state employees and private vendors. We do not contract with any of the vendors but require them to comply with North Dakota Court System Policy 206. Policy 206 can be found on the court's website at:
<https://www.ndcourts.gov/Media/Default/court-administration/Administrative-Policies/Pol206-Fees--Expenses-for-Preparation-of-Transcripts.pdf>

Our current list of approved vendors include:

eScribers
Transcription Outsourcing
Lawrence Court Transcription & Video
Jeanne Brevik
Jean Lindvig

- Q. **Are \$3.25 for standard delivery and \$4.25 for expedited delivery the current rates? Is the per-page rate intended to be all inclusive the covers the original and all copies for all parties? Is the vendor allowed to charge a separate copy rate for electronic copies?**

- A. They are the current rates as established by North Dakota Court System Policy 206 for preparation of a transcript. As stated in the RFP, "The North Dakota Court System defines preparation of the transcript as the creation of an original written transcript to be filed in the office of the clerk of court and one electronic copy for each party separately represented, and, if parole or probation has been granted to the defendant, then one electronic copy to the North Dakota Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation."

A separate copy fee is not allowed for electronic copies.

- Q. **Must the vendor be fully registered with the North Dakota Secretary of State by the proposal submission deadline, or is this requirement only necessary prior to the contract award/effective date.**

- A. The vendor must be registered with the North Dakota Secretary of state prior to a contract award.

- Q. **Does the Court System have monthly fluctuations in transcript volume or should the vendor assume a steady average?**

- A. We have no data or statistics on requests for transcripts as those are currently spread out across 56 employees and 5 private vendors. Without this data, the vendor should assume a steady average rate.

- Q. **Is there historical data on average transcript length?**

- A. We have no data on this. It would be unusual for a single court proceeding to exceed 2 hours or for a non-felony trial to exceed 2 days.

- Q. **What percentage of recordings historically contain challenging audio (multiple speakers, poor microphone pickup, noisy environment, remote appearances, etc.)?**

- A. We have no data on this. All of our courtrooms are equipped with a digital audio recording system that is integrated with the sound amplification system. This includes a separate channel for those appearing remotely.
- Q. What percentage of annual transcripts historically qualify as expedited (less than 14 days)?**
- A. We have no data on this.
- Q. Is a surety bond required?**
- A. Proof of insurance may substitute for a surety bond.
- Q. Could the court provide more detail on the evaluation factors used for awarding the five discretionary cost points?**
- A. The intent of the discretionary points is to take into account services that the vendor may provide that are not included in the required cost proposal. For example, a vendor may offer an additional discounted price for those willing to wait 90 days for a transcript or have a pricing schedule that allows for quicker turnaround times than the 14 days identified in the RFP.
- Q. If there are multiple awards, how will the work be divided.**
- A. The court's preference is for one award to a single vendor. We believe this is possible due to the relatively low volume of transcripts requested each year. However, in the event we need to contract with more than one vendor, the work would be divided based on the court's administrative unit structure.
- Q. What system or software are you using to record?**
- A. CourtSmart
- Q. How often are hard copies of transcripts requested? How often are requests made to send a transcript on a portable storage device?**
- A. We have no data on either of these types of requests.
- Q. What is considered to be equivalent to an AAERT certification?**
- A. Generally, a certification for recording and transcribing from another state or federal agency would be considered equivalent, as would certification from the National Court Reporters Association or graduation from a court reporting school. Other training and testing may be considered but it would be the vendor's responsibility to provide sufficient explanation about the training to allow the court to make that determination.

- Q. We proofread all of our work against the audio once it is typed. Can the proofer sign-off on the transcript?**
- A.** Yes. The final reviewer, whether it is the proofreader or the actual transcriptionist, may sign the certification.
- Q. Will all transcripts be no fewer than 25 lines?**
- A.** For readability and cost purposes, transcripts should be no less than 25 lines nor more than 27 lines.
- Q. Is there an allowance for a minimum charge? For example, if a transcript is only two or three pages.**
- A.** There is currently no allowance for a minimum charge but a vendor may include either a flat fee or minimum charge in their proposal.
- Q. Are court ordered transcripts available free of charge to all parties to the action?**
- A.** Only one per-page preparation fee may be charged for a transcript, which is paid by the requestor. Preparation includes an electronic copy to all parties at no charge to them.
- Q. When a party to a court proceeding purchases a transcript, is it anticipated that the court receives a copy of the transcript free of charge.**
- A.** Yes. We require an electronic copy of any transcript of a court proceeding be filed with the clerk of court where the proceeding occurred. This is included in the per-page preparation fee.
- Q. Must all requests for transcript production need approval by the court?**
- A.** Yes. This will be part of the process when the vendor receives a request for transcript and asks the court to upload the audio recording.
- Q. Please define what is meant by proposed production services in Section V under Categories Section V(A).**
- A.** Proposed production services refers to the entire business process of receiving transcript requests, collecting payments, assigning transcriptionists, internal quality assurance processes, delivering of transcripts and protocol for responding to complaints.