

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI) – NORTH DAKOTA DIGITAL AUDIO UPGRADE/REPLACEMENT

VENDOR QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q: What is the current recording system?

A: The current recording system is VoicelQ Satellite.

Q: Is there a need or interest in more than 4 audio channels?

A: 4 audio channels is the required minimum. Proposals that include more than 4 audio channels are encouraged and will be evaluated based on additional functionality and cost.

Q: Will there be a future interest in Capturing Video? This could be capturing video from video arraignment/remote testimony, evidence presentation in the courtroom or traditional cameras in the court.

A: Capturing video is not a current requirement, however this could change in the future and having the capability would be a benefit. Proposals that could do only audio as well as proposals that that could do both audio and video will be considered. Proposals that include equipment that handle only audio to begin with but have the capability of expanding and using video in the future would also be considered.

Q: Are you looking to upgrade the current sound systems in the courtrooms at the same time?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you need to upgrade your microphones?

A: Yes

If so how many per room?

A: It varies based on courtroom size. 6 to 10 microphones are used today in each courtroom. 8 is a good average number to use for each courtroom.

How many will require a Mute switch?

A: Generally 3 microphones have mute capability in each courtroom. Judge's, plaintiff's attorney, and defendant's attorney microphones are generally the three that have mute switches.

Q: Do you need to upgrade the speakers in the rooms?

A: Yes

If so how many per room?

A: It varies based on courtroom size and acoustics.

Q: Will the Court be providing the recording PCs and Servers or do you want the vendor to provide those?

A: Court will provide and maintain the recording PC's and Servers unless the proposal includes unique proprietary equipment that the court is unable to provide and maintain.

Q: It is stated there are 102 Courtrooms. How many Courthouses are there?

A: 53 courthouses and 3 law enforcement centers. The law enforcement centers are located in the same cities as the courthouses.

Q: Ref requirement 12b, Please provide clarification on current state-of-the-art technology that court is requesting. Does the court have a certain mixer already in mind?

A: The court does not have a certain mixer in mind, but the mixer typically needs to interface with a recording PC. The court prefers that the interface between the mixer and the PC not require a separate PCI based sound card. The reason is because many PC manufacturers are no longer including PCI slots on their motherboards anymore.

Q: Ref requirement 12a, Does the court consider company developed software and hardware items for use in courts as proprietary?

A: Yes, the court would consider company developed software and hardware items to be proprietary. The court's preference would be to limit its use of proprietary hardware primarily because it limits the courts from using other vendor's hardware in the future, however the court would still encourage companies that use proprietary hardware to respond to this RFI so the courts can evaluate their proposed hardware and software solution. The court fully understands that the software will typically be proprietary and the court will want the vendor to maintain the software as needed for the unforeseeable future.

Q: Ref requirement 9, Please provide explanation for the level of access feature for specification 9: Such as who does the court want to control this feature?

A: The court recorder or clerk of court typically control the level of access to recorded court case audio files and annotations.

Q: How many District Court sites are there?

A: There are 53 courthouses and 3 law enforcement centers statewide. Within those 56 facilities, there are a total of 102 district courtrooms.

Q: What is your time frame? Start?/Completion?

A: The court hopes to gather enough information from this RFI to be able to approach the state's legislature in January 2019 and request funding to begin this project. If funding is approved, work could begin as early as July 2019. The court anticipates that it could take between 2 and 6 years to fully complete the work statewide. If the legislature rejects the budget request, the project will not be started.

Q: Are there public address system issues?

A: Yes. The current equipment is over 10 years old on average and is prone to various issues.

Q: Do you require multi-channel recordings?

A: Yes. Multi-channel recordings are required. Primarily to be able to isolate each microphone's audio if needed. The court does recognize that in some cases the output of two microphones will be tied to the same channel, but the court would like to limit the number of times this occurs in each courtroom.

Q: Do you wish to "live stream" the proceedings?

A: There is no desire to "live stream" the proceedings at this time.

Q: What will the recording media be? Thumb drives? SD cards?

A: The recordings will be stored on PC and server disk drives. Copies of recordings will be burned to CDs or DVDs if needed. Thumb drives and SD cards are not used.

Q: Will the proceedings be stored at each site or in a network?

A: The proceedings will be stored in both locations. The first copy is created and stored in the courtroom and a secondary copy of the file is stored on a separate server located in a different physical location.

Q: How skilled are your operators? Do they require simple, one-button operation?

A: The court recorders are very skilled and do not require a simple, one-button operation. Most have been performing their job for many years.

Q: Has the state issued specifications and/or standards?

A: The state has not issued specifications or standards and has no plans to do so.

Q: What issues does the Court have with the recording software vendor or recording software and hardware solution?

A: The primary issue the court has with the current solution is its unreliability. Statewide, the hardware components range from just a few months old to 20+ years old and have become unreliable with age. The current software version is pretty stable compared to previous versions and for the most part meets the current needs of the courts. The court has maintained a stable relationship with the current vendor for over 10 years.

Q: How much is the Court currently spending to maintain the software and hardware recording solution?

A: Approximately \$223,000 annually.

Q: When was the last software update applied to the recording solution and what was the cost of the update?

A: The last software upgrade was applied approximately 2 years ago. There was no cost to upgrade the software as it is included in the annual maintenance agreement.

Q: Page 7, please clarify the difference between the following requirements.

- g. The system must have the ability to import data such as case number and participants' names from the case management system.**
- h. Capable of loading the Judge's calendar into the recording system in a macro type format, enabling the courtroom clerk to click on a case to insert the case name and number and associated time stamp into the logging system.**

A: There is virtually no difference between the two requirements. In general the court requires the need to be able to interface with the current Odyssey[®] case management system, thereby eliminating the need for clerks to re-key case information into the recording system prior to starting a court recording session.

Q: Page 7, item 7-c, states the vendor is to supply a headset as an ADA component for the hearing impaired? The RFI requirement as stated does not comply with ADA standards. Is the Court seeking an approved ADA assistive listening device? Is the vendor to provide an approved ADA assistive listening device for each courtroom?

A: Yes. The court is seeking an approved ADA assistive listening device for each courtroom.

Q: Page 8, item 16-e, The RFI requires recording capability for 4 -8 microphones. Please clarify the 32-audio channel playback requirement? What additional inputs are required?

A: Page 8, item 16-e of the RFI states, "Playback of up to 32" audio channels. The court will accept any proposal with at least 4 separate channels; however the court desires the capability to have additional separate channels if the hardware and software are capable of handling more channels. Having the ability to isolate the channels individually assists with

transcribing the record as well as general listening to the record. Note - It is rare to have more than 10 microphones in any existing courtroom today.

Q: Page 9, item 18-a states: "Must be capable of being used as a transcribing unit." What is the Court's definition of a transcribing unit?

A: The recording system/solution must be capable of being used as a transcribing unit. The court individuals responsible for transcripts will need the capability to listen to the recordings and as they do, they will need to stop, start, and rewind the recordings while they type out the spoken text. If need be, the transcriber may need to isolate, turn the volume up or down and listen to the output from just one microphone to ensure they are hearing and transcribing correctly.

Q: The Court is requesting an off-the-shelf solution. This conflicts with the requirement on page 8, 12-a allowing a proprietary solution, it states "Utilization of an open architecture approach, utilizing devices with standard interfaces. Proprietary interfaces will limit the Court to using that vendor's equipment only." Does the Court want to purchase proprietary hardware maintained by a single vendor?

A: The court does not want to purchase proprietary hardware maintained by a single vendor. The court's preference would be to limit its use of proprietary hardware primarily because it prevents the courts from using other vendor's hardware in the future. However, for the purposes of this RFI, the court would still encourage companies that use proprietary hardware to respond to this RFI so the courts can evaluate their proposed hardware and software solution.

Q: If the Court was not bound by the two year budget cycle would the Court replace the recording software and hardware sooner?

A: No.

Q: Would the Court want to see a demonstration of the vendor's solution as part of the RFI process?

A: No. That will be part of the Request for Proposal (RFP) process.

Q: What are your needs and expectations?

A: Needs – The court's long-term needs are to replace the aging/unreliable court recording equipment with modern digital court recording hardware/equipment and software/systems that will produce clear, near 100% reliable audio records of courtroom proceedings. Expectations – The court's expectations are that interested vendors will respond to this RFI with their equipment and system solution proposals as well as their estimated implementation costs. After evaluation, the courts will use this information to approach the 2019 Legislative assembly to request ample funding to begin the installation processes.