

TO: Firms and Individuals Qualified to Sell, Install, and Maintain Digital Audio Equipment

FROM: Sally Holewa, State Court Administrator

SUBJECT: Request for Proposal (RFI) – Digital Audio Upgrade/Replacement

DATE: March 12, 2018

The North Dakota Court System has issued a Request for Information to determine the feasibility and costs of either an upgrade to, or a replacement of, the digital audio system currently used to record and transcribe courtroom proceedings. Vendors responding to this RFI should carefully consider their staffing levels and the amount of time needed to upgrade or replace equipment in over 100 courtrooms spread across 71,230 square miles and propose a multi-year phased project, if appropriate. For planning purposes, the North Dakota Court System operates on a 2-year budget cycle and all major projects are funded accordingly.

The complete RFI, any amendments to the RFI, schedule of events, and other RFI related information can be retrieved from the following website: www.ndcourts.gov/rfp. Vendors are encouraged to visit the website often to check for updated information related to this RFI.

Deadline to Respond

All vendor communications related to this RFI and all proposals must be submitted to the State Court Administrator at the address listed in the RFI. The deadline to submit a proposal in response to the RFI is **4:30 p.m. central time, May 8, 2018.**

Timelines for Project Start and Finish

The expected start date of any project to upgrade or replace the digital audio systems is unknown. The North Dakota Court System intends to use the information received from responses to this RFI to develop a budget request and timeline for a partial or complete upgrade or replacement of digital audio systems currently in use in 102 courtrooms. This budget request will be presented to the North Dakota legislature when it convenes in January 2019. **If a project is approved and adequately funded, a Request for Proposal (RFP) will be issued no later than May 31 2019. The mandatory completion date for any project funded during the 2019-2021 biennium is June 30, 2021.**

Confidentiality Warning

Vendors should note that this RFI is being issued by a governmental entity. All contents of proposals, including the cost proposal and final contract for the project, become publicly accessible documents once the bid has been awarded. **Any vendor requesting that access to proprietary information be restricted must make the request in a letter submitted separately from their proposal.** The letter must describe the type of information to be restricted and the business reason restriction is desired. Vendors will be notified if their request to restrict information is denied and will be given an opportunity to withdraw or modify their proposal.

NORTH DAKOTA COURT SYSTEM
OFFICE OF THE STATE COURT ADMINISTRATOR
600 E. BOULEVARD, MAILSTOP 180
BISMARCK, NORTH DAKOTA

Request for Information

Upgrade or Replacement of Courtroom Digital
Audio System

Date of Issue: March 12, 2018
RFI No. 180-18-01

**REQUEST FOR INFORMATION:
NORTH DAKOTA DISTRICT COURT - DIGITAL AUDIO SYSTEMS
RFI No. 180-18-01**

INTENT AND OBJECTIVES

The North Dakota Court System is seeking to upgrade or replace its current digital audio recording system statewide. The purpose of this Request for Information (RFI) is to solicit information from digital audio recording system vendors about their system capabilities and obtain cost estimates. This information will be used to assist the Court in determining how best to meet the future audio recording needs of the Court and prepare a future Request for Proposal (RFP) to obtain necessary hardware, software and services.

North Dakota's major objectives include creating a robust digital court recording system that produces clear, reliable audio records of courtroom proceedings. Therefore, the Court desires an advanced solution for recording, archiving, copying and transcribing proceedings.

Overall the Court requests that Vendors propose to supply the necessary software, hardware, and services to enable the Court to clearly and reliably record court proceedings in each courtroom on a daily basis, archive these recordings in the most cost effective manner, and to produce written transcripts of these recordings, as needed.

The purpose of this Request for Information (RFI) is to:

- Identify vendors, products and services that can provide a more comprehensive statewide digital audio recording system than is currently in use.
- Obtain an estimate of costs associated with the proposed comprehensive digital audio recording system, including hardware, software, and other services (e.g., project management, configuration, installation, integration, data conversion, and training).

The Court will consider RFI responses to upgrade or replace its current digital audio system using one of the following approaches:

- 1) an off-the-shelf digital audio recording system, customized to meet the needs of the Courts, to also include replacement of all hardware statewide or just selective existing hardware as deemed necessary to bring the hardware to minimum vendor recommendations/requirements
- 2) a custom-developed digital audio recording system that will meet the needs of the Courts, to also include replacement of all hardware statewide or just selective existing hardware as deemed necessary to bring the hardware to minimum vendor recommendations/requirements

Responses to this RFI will assist the Court in developing a procurement strategy, and an RFP will eventually follow as funding permits. During the formal procurement process, the Court will weigh the quality and expected lifecycle of the proposed solution, its fit with local business practices and technical environment, its flexibility and adaptability to future needs, the capability and experience and performance history of the vendor, the quality of the implementation plan, time to implement, total cost of ownership of the system, and the level of risk in determining which approach and which vendor to select.

NORTH DAKOTA COURT ORGANIZATION

The North Dakota Court System is a unified state court system that includes 53 district courts. The Court is further divided into four regional administrative units. A profile of the current North Dakota court structure and more details about the court structure and jurisdiction can be found on the Court's website at: <http://www.ndcourts.gov>

AUDIO RECORDING ENVIRONMENT

There are currently 102 courtrooms statewide with installed digital audio systems. The systems are a mixture of hardware components ranging in age from just a few months old to 20+ years old. Generally each courtroom will contain a sound system with overhead speakers, at least four condenser microphones, an 8 channel or 16 channel analog or digital mixer, a device for interfacing teleconference or video conferencing audio into the mixer and an audio recording PC that is recording all of the audio into four channels. Some locations may have hardware for assisting the hearing impaired or wireless microphones instead of hardwired microphones. The audio is recorded onto the courtroom PC during the day and archived to a remote central server after 8pm that evening. As needed, staff may listen to recordings or make copies of recordings from the central server. Additional copies can also be burned onto CD or DVD from the courtroom PC's if needed. All courtroom PC's are currently using the same recording system software statewide.

TECHNICAL ENVIRONMENT

Although the project scope is focused on digital audio recording, the information in this section provides a more complete view of the current technical environment for most major systems supported by the Court's Judicial Branch Information Technology department (JBIT). It also explains services that are supplied by the Executive Branch Information Technology Department (ITD) to the Court.

The technical environment generally consists of Windows-based desktops and a variety of server platforms connected via an IP-based network. Desktop support is provided through JBIT. Wide Area Network (WAN) service is provided by ITD.

SERVER ENVIRONMENT

The majority of the court servers are located on the grounds of the North Dakota State Capitol in a server room that is maintained by ITD. The server room has redundant - power feeds, uninterruptible power supplies and cooling units. Most of the servers are Cisco blade servers. The majority of the disk files are stored on an IBM XIV SAN - disk storage array. Most of the servers are virtualized by using VMware.

DESKTOP ENVIRONMENT

The desktop environment includes Intel desktops running Windows 7, Windows 8, and Windows 10 operating systems.

SERVER OPERATING SYSTEMS

- Microsoft IIS Web Server
- Windows 2008, 2008r2, 2012, 2012 r2, 2016 - Data Center 32/64 bit versions

DATABASES

- Microsoft SQL 2008, Microsoft SQL 2012
- Oracle 10g

COURT CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The Odyssey Case Management System, which was purchased from Tyler Technologies Inc., is the primary repository for all district court cases and several municipal courts. Odyssey is SQL-based and housed on several tiered servers. Odyssey stores all case documents as digital images. Access to court records is supplied to the general public through the Odyssey public access portal. Access to court records and imaged court documents is supplied to the Court's justice partners via Odyssey's secure public access portal. E-filing is mandatory statewide.

Each morning, the digital audio recorders download a daily session list from Odyssey to the courtroom recording PC. The session list is a daily list of all scheduled cases for that courtroom. This process preloads the current digital audio PCs with the necessary data to begin recording each day. If the download fails the recorder must add the case/party information manually into the digital audio recording system.

NETWORK SERVICES

ITD provides both local and wide area network services for state government agencies. All LAN segments are switched 100 megabit or 1GB Ethernet networks. End user connectivity is carrier based Ethernet Transport services consisting of 5M, 10M, 100M and 1G Ethernet circuits. The Courts operate on a 1GB circuit. End User support is provided through a central ITD help desk; this service is available 24x7x365.

WEB ENVIRONMENT

The Court has both an intranet and Internet server to support a variety of applications.

DIRECTORY SERVICES

The Court uses a Windows Active Directory structure. The Court retains all control and administration of this Active Directory system. The environment includes four Active Directory servers that include domain controllers, global catalog servers, and LDAP servers using Microsoft Windows 2012 r2 Server technology. NDCOURTS.GOV is a single domain, single forest, and a multiple Organizational Unit (OU) structure. Each administrative unit has its own OU with a child OU for each judicial district.

E-MAIL ENVIRONMENT

The North Dakota Court System supports their Microsoft Exchange 2016 e-mail system on the NDCOURTS.GOV domain. JBIT has two Exchange 2016 servers supporting about 600 e-mail boxes. E-mails are relayed through two ITD e-mail relay servers before arriving at the SPAM server.

SCOPE OF REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

The North Dakota Court System is seeking assistance in determining a strategy for upgrading the digital audio recording systems. This likely will consist of upgrading or replacing the current system hardware. The Court system will consider all ideas offered by commercial suppliers of software packages and services. The North Dakota Court System requests that you provide a description of your products and services that might be considered in meeting its goal of improving the digital audio recording processes.

The Contractor must provide a system that meets the following system requirements:

1. Alarm System:

A visual warning signal must notify the operator of no audio recording; preferable on the Clerk's screen.

2. Auto Gain Control:

- a. Recording level should be controlled by auto gain control rather than manual.
- b. Noise filtration must also be included.

3. Backup, Storage and Security:

- a. The system must automatically back up (mirror) the recorded audio/video simultaneously in two locations/machines as it is being captured for record security purposes.
- b. The system must allow for the digital audio record to be stored both locally and on a network shared server.
- c. It must have record-over protection and must have provisions to minimize the possibility of record tampering after it is recorded into the system.
- d. Contractor must provide minimum bandwidth and storage requirements.
- e. Contractor must provide Front End Interface access to a Centralized Archiving System.
- f. The Centralized Archiving System should also have the capability of storing data using Cloud technology if desired, ultimately giving the Court the option to store data either on premise or in the Cloud.

4. Connecting to External Audio and Video Sources:

If a video conference or teleconference is used in the courtroom, then additional audio, digital signal processor, and audio mixer connections and software support must be provided.

5. Controls:

The recorder must have:

- a. Separate play back controls for each channel.
- b. Tone control.
- c. Individual channel selection switch.
- d. An all channel selection switch.

6. Digital Counter:

- a. The device must have a digital counter or comparable means of logging and locating the place on the recording where specific proceedings or testimony took place.

- b. The system must have the ability to allow for a time code to be embedded in the digital recording file.
- c. The date and time must be recorded and stored for each log entry.
- d. The system must have the ability to register the identity and record the name of the speaker by location (such as microphone and/or recording track).
- e. The system must also allow for search of the record by speaker, all data fields for any keyword, and phrase.
- f. Searches must include case name, case number, case ID, Judge, time and date of record, court department, location, name of witness, defendant or any other pertinent information related to the case.
- 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.

7. Headphones and Earphones:

- a. The System must provide earphone capability for monitoring the recording signal.
- b. The signal going to the earphones must come from a separate play back so that the monitor will hear what has actually been recorded.
- c. Headphone capability must also be available for the hearing impaired and may include headphones for people in the galley.

8. Integration with Odyssey case management system:

The system must have the ability to import and export data from the Odyssey case management system and provide the means to listen to the court hearing from within Odyssey.

9. Level of Access:

- a. The system must have the ability to establish 3 levels of access to an entire record or to portions of a record: Public, Confidential, and Sealed. Anybody may access a public record. Access to confidential records is limited to groups of persons based on assigned roles (some examples of assigned roles are prosecutor, court reporter, or clerk). Access to sealed records is limited to the judge assigned to a case, his or her court reporter/recorder and the clerk of court in the county where the case is filed. An example of a single record that may require different levels of access is a criminal case that is a public record except for the name and testimony of a child victim.
- b. Sealing may or may not involve the use of file encryption. The Court has no preference as to how a recording is sealed.
- c. The system must have the ability to annotate potentially sealed and confidential matters and to seal such matters both during the proceedings and, as directed by the court, at a later date in time.

10. Management Reports:

Analytical and operational information including utilization, storage capacity, audit logs and security access information. The Courts will use the data from these reports for accountability purposes.

- 11. Number of microphones:**
 - a. Each court sound recording system must be equipped with at least four microphones.
 - b. The unit must continuously monitor all microphones and provide at least visual indication that each is picking up a signal.
 - c. An audio alarm, in addition to a visual indicator, is desirable. The Court personnel must be notified if any microphone is not recording.

- 12. Open architecture:**
 - a. Utilization of an open architecture approach, utilizing devices with standard interfaces. Proprietary interfaces will limit the Court to using that vendor's equipment only.
 - b. Mixer interfaces should be using current digital state-of-the art technology to connect to the recording PC's. (PCI and PCIe interfaces are not considered state-of-the art technology today.)
 - c. Mixers should be Ethernet network capable to allow for remote configuration, troubleshooting and management.
 - d. Systems must be capable of exporting to widely used industry standards which include WMV, WMA, MP3/4 and AVI.
 - e. Compatibility with standard peripheral devices used in transcription, such as foot pedals and headphones using industry standard interfaces.

- 13. Power Requirement:**
 - a. Must operate on a standard 110/120 VAC, 60Hz.
 - b. The use of Uninterruptable Power Supplies (UPS) is recommended on courtroom equipment.

- 14. Recording Channels:**

The device must be capable of simultaneously recording at least four (4) separate channels, each of which has a separate play back control so that one channel separately or any combination of channels may be played back.

- 15. Recording Format:**
 - a. The system must store the converted audio signal in an open, publicly available (non-proprietary) digital format.
 - b. Record-over protection will provide the provisions to minimize the possibility of record tampering after it is recorded into the system. After a session is recorded into the system, users will be unable to delete or record over the session.

- 16. Record Playback:**
 - a. The system must be capable of playing back a portion of the recording while still recording.
 - b. Also play the recording back at a sufficient quality level to enable the preparation of a complete, true, and correct transcript. For transcribing purposes the playback audio must be of a high quality.
 - c. The system must be able to isolate the voices of speakers who speak simultaneously.
 - d. Provide separate volume controls for each channel.
 - e. Playback of up to 32 audio and a minimum of 4 video channels of recordings.
 - f. Bookmarks to allow you to navigate quickly in a sound file and store notes at chosen positions in a sound file.

- g. File notes can be added to a recorded file.
- h. Noise Suppression software.

17. Speed typing hot keys:

18. Transcribing Capability:

- a. Must be capable of being used as a transcribing unit.
- b. Hardware should include a Universal Serial Bus (USB) connected foot pedal that assist the transcribers to control play, fast forward, stop, and back space.
- c. The system must allow the transcriber to select one or more channels to isolate speakers and allow for volume control per channel.

19. Optional Video Recording:

The device must be capable of recording audio and simultaneously accepting an optional video feed from an independent video system; or recording both audio and video in a combined solution. If a combined solution is offered, Court personnel must be able to easily turn off the video input if not desired or needed.

20. Wire Shielding:

- a. Radio frequency suppression circuits and / or shielding to guarantee preventing pickup of radio frequency interference or other electronic interference.
- b. Wiring must be balanced, shielded cabling that supports industry standard cabling and connectors.

21. Additional Requirements:

Courtroom recording PCs should be able to handle the use of additional clerk applications (Odyssey case management system, email, etc.) simultaneously while recording the courtroom audio.

22. Training:

- a. Materials and onsite startup training for all staff associated with the recording system.
- b. Training must include all software applications related to the recording system.
- c. Train the Trainer: The vendor will also train our trainers so they can provide initial and advanced training to court personnel as needed after the installation is complete.

23. Contractor Experience:

Vendor shall demonstrate at least five (5) years of work experience in developing, installing, training, maintaining and supporting the proposed digital recording system in a court environment or similar high demand/quick response environment.

24. Deliverables and Acceptance:

Vendor shall propose a deliverables/milestone schedule that will also serve as the basis for a future payment schedule. The schedule will be tied to the installation of completed systems for each of the four Units. A Unit shall be considered complete once all courtrooms are successfully installed, tested and fully operational. Tested is defined as the installed systems being operational in every courtroom in the Unit for ten full court business days. The final payment will be made after the final contracted Unit is accepted. In all cases, payment to the Contractor will be contingent upon State

Court Administrator's approval and completion of all deliverables.

25. Maintenance and Warranty:

- a. Warranty must include in-person service within 24 hours of a service call. We require the ability to purchase a set amount of service call hours for the initial 3 year period, with the option to purchase more hours within those 3 years as needed. We require the service contract to also include phone and email support (to be proposed by the Vendor).

26. Installation Warranty:

- a. Installation Warranty:
The installed systems must be covered for a period of 12 months for service calls and manufacturer's warranty work at no additional cost to the Judiciary.

27. Extended Warranty:

- a. Extended Warranty:
Three years extended warranty plan/service agreement that covers the equipment for three years beyond installation, with the option to purchase the service maintenance agreement annually following the initial four years.

RESPONSE INSTRUCTIONS

1) Please provide a brief and succinct description of your proposed solution for the upgrade or replacement of the digital audio recording system. Address as many of the system requirements as possible.

2) Cost estimates in Excel format in the following categories (enter zero or "Unknown" if your estimate does not include an estimate in a particular category):

- A. Digital audio system software licensing
- B. Hardware purchase costs
- C. Consulting
- D. Project Management
- E. Design, Customization, and Configuration
- F. Data Conversion
- G. Installation
- H. Data Exchanges with the Odyssey system
- I. Training & Implementation
- J. Annual Maintenance/Support
- K. Other Costs

We recognize that providing cost and time estimates is difficult with such limited information, but require approximations of the cost of your software applications and implementation services, as well as estimates of the time required to complete deployment, using the number of courtroom locations as a basis for deployment and licensing. The North Dakota Court System desires to better understand the available alternatives before pursuing a more formal acquisition process.

Deadline to Respond

Please submit your text response in Word or PDF format and Excel spreadsheet of cost estimates

either in paper hardcopy form or electronically by email before **May 8, 2018**. To reduce file size, please do not include any unnecessary graphics or colored pages in your response.

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