



## Inside a Translation RFP: Ten Topics and Key Questions to Ask

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If you are conducting an RFP to select a translation & localization service provider, you probably already have a list of requirements and questions you want to ask. But in our experience, many “standard” translation RFPs miss some key points and questions that should be asked of all prospective suppliers.

Below, organized by topic, are several questions, and some additional tips, that you might want to consider including in your RFP.

### 1. Partnership & Coaching

**Procurement Manager:** “Our company could use some guidance and coaching from our prospective localization partner as we develop our internal capabilities in managing translations.”

**Questions:**

- What kind of coaching, guidance, or mentoring can you offer us?
- Will we have to pay for that assistance?
- Can you offer success stories where you’ve helped similar-sized companies get up to speed in managing translations?

### 2. Translation Training

**Questions:**

- What kind of training programs, if any, do you offer to help companies better manage their translation volume?
- Can you provide examples of a syllabus or curriculum showing the types of training programs you offer?
- What are the costs associated with your training offerings?

### 3. Strategic Solution

**Procurement Manager.** “My company is looking for an enterprise-level, strategic solution for managing its translation work. We want to select a translation partner who can provide such a solution that fits our needs and corporate culture.”

**Questions:**

- What is **your** strategic vision for managing **our** translation work?
- Does your solution require special technology, an investment in resources, or a budget commitment? If so, how much?
- How can I be sure your solution is tailored to our needs, not just a cookie-cutter solution that you apply across all clients?

### 4. Project Management

**Procurement Manager.** “We will have many buyers from across the company requesting translation services. Our selected translation partner will have to respond to a variety of requesters with varying skill levels, needs, concerns, and personalities”

**Questions:**

- What kind of project management model do you use?
- How will your project management team handle such requests?
- How does your project management team add value to the translation request process?

### 5. Quality

**Procurement Manager.** “Quality is critical to our company. Please provide a detailed explanation of how you achieve, maintain and ensure quality.”

**Questions:**

**Quality Processes and Certification**

- Do you have a quality system? Please describe.
- Is your company ISO-certified?
- How do you qualify your translators?

**Quality Tools, Reporting and Metrics**

- Do you use quality management tools such as Six Sigma or Lean? Please describe your experience with these tools.

- How do you measure quality?
- Do you produce regular reports demonstrating quality? If so, please provide detailed descriptions and sample reports.

#### **Errors**

- What happens when you discover a translation error?
- What happens if you discover an error after publication?
- Does your company have errors and omissions or liability insurance that covers translation errors? If so, what are the limits?

#### **In-country Review**

- Do you consider in-country review to be an important quality step?
- How do you manage in-country reviews?
- What do you do if your client does not have an in-country review resource?

## **6. Translation Memory**

**Procurement Manager.** “We have been learning about the use of Translation Memory and how it saves time and cost, while improving quality and consistency. Obviously, any translation partner we select will have to use some form of TM.”

#### **Questions:**

- What kind of Translation Memory tools do you use, and why? What costs are associated with your TM?
- Who owns the translation memory—do we, or do you?
- Is your translation memory portable from one translation vendor to another, or will I be locked into using you in the future?
- Can multiple Language Service Providers (i.e., translation companies) access the memory? What are the advantages and disadvantages to a shared memory?

## **7. Technology**

**Procurement Manager.** “Translation technologies, including translation memory tools, are enabling companies to achieve greater levels of efficiency and savings. Please explain your technology approach that will enable us to maximize the benefit of our translation spend.”

#### **Questions:**

- What tools and technologies do you use to facilitate project management?
- How do you use technology to improve productivity, reduce costs, and improve service?
- How do you stay current with industry technologies and tools? How do you help your clients to stay current?

## 8. Pricing

**Procurement Manager:** “An apples to apples comparison of translation pricing across all suppliers is essential to an objective comparison of suppliers. Please answer the pricing and rate questions below.”

### Questions:

- What are your pricing units? Per word? Per-hour? Per-page? Other? Please define all units.
- In the following list of services, please indicate the rate and any qualifications or notes that further explain the service or rate. If rates change by language, please indicate:

#### Language Services

Translation  
 Editing  
 Proofreading  
 Glossary development/management  
 Translation Memory management/updating

#### Layout/Graphics Services

Preflighting  
 Formatting/Layout

#### Project Management

Project management  
 In-country review management

- Are ALL costs associated with your service included in the pricing matrix?

## 9. Management Reports

**Procurement Manager:** “We need to measure and see continuous improvement in our company. Our translation supplier needs to understand and support this with management reports.”

### Questions:

- How would you track our company’s translation activity in a way that leads to rolled-up management reports?
- Can you provide examples of such reports, in addition to showing us how the reports are generated and accessed?

- Will we have to pay for such reports?

## 10. Liability, Errors and Omissions

**Procurement Manager.** “Managing risk and determining responsibility for translation errors are important business functions. Please explain your policies and procedures for dealing with translation errors.”

**Questions:**

- How do you manage the risk of translation errors?
- In the event a translation error is discovered, how do you determine responsibility for the error?
- How do you determine the cost of the error, and who covers that cost?
- Does your company have errors and omissions or liability insurance that covers translation errors? If so, what are the limits?