



Tenders for Conference Interpreting Services

Need help to create effective tenders for conference interpreting services? Here are some useful guidelines for international organisations, national administrations, NGOs and private companies.

Private Market Sector Standing Committee.

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These guidelines are to help event organisers create effective tenders for conference interpreting services. They have been devised by AIIC, the only worldwide association of conference interpreters.

The guidelines may be useful to international organisations, national administrations, NGOs and private companies.

The guidelines cover the supply of conference interpretation services. They don't cover the supply of interpretation equipment or written translation services.

Conference interpretation

Conference interpretation is a specialist profession which requires specialist post-graduate training. Most interpreters are self-employed freelancers. They are recruited individually for each event and are contracted in a number of ways:

- directly by the client
- indirectly by an international organisation
- through a consultant interpreter

Consultant interpreters recruit teams of interpreters to meet the needs of a particular client or event. They assess the language, interpreting and subject matter requirements before choosing the right interpreters for the job and offering a tailor-made solution to the client's needs. They take responsibility for the quality of the interpreters selected and for the work they perform



A consulting interpreter may be an individual freelance or may work in a small group with other interpreters.

Standards

There is no international agreed standard for conference interpreting. Professional organisations such as AIIC fill this gap by setting tough prerequisites for membership and providing guidelines such as shown here.

Detailed information on creating a tender can be found [here](#).

Selection criteria for interpreting services

The following criteria should be considered by an event organiser or contracting authority when issuing a tender for interpreting services. (Download the pdf for more detail.)

Information required for submitting a tender

Tenderers need to be given the following information:

- place, number and dates of meetings
- subject matter
- likely timetable
- type of interpretation required (simultaneous, consecutive)
- languages that will be spoken at the meeting(s) and languages into which interpretation is required.

If the dates and languages of meetings are not yet known, an outline agreement may still be possible.

Professional suitability

Interpreting is a demanding activity. The service provider must be an expert in interpretation and preferably a working interpreter who knows the recruited interpreters.

Professional associations such as AIIC set very strict admission standards for conference interpreters. They also set similar standards for consultant interpreters, which ensure their expertise and experience in selecting and recruiting teams of interpreters.

Economic and financial standing



Contracting authorities should be **flexible in the proof of financial soundness** they require. Consultant interpreters normally operate as sole traders or in small groups, and have various forms of commercial and legal status. Different legal and accounting standards will apply depending on where they are based.

Contractors should **set no limits on subcontracting**. The interpreting services provider normally has to recruit and subcontract self-employed freelancers for each language, possibly from other countries.

Technical and/or professional ability

The tenderer should give evidence of their ability to provide a professional service in the following areas:

- Consultancy services for conference interpreting, showing the number of interpreter-days delivered in the previous three years;
- Proof of membership of a reputable professional interpreters association (AIIC or equivalent).
- Detailed description of service provided (selection and organisation of interpreters);
- Description of the methods and infrastructure used to provide the service;
- Professional and academic qualifications and relevant experience of the consultant interpreter and the proposed interpreters.

Quality assurance

Even though there is no international quality standard for conference interpreting, membership of AIIC (or an equivalent) is **the best guarantee of professional standards** and quality.

AIIC membership is granted only after a stringent admission procedure akin to a certification process. The Association sets high standards of competence and professionalism for both consultant interpreters and individual interpreters.

Budget

A quote put forward by a tenderer ought to be broken down as follows (this is not an exhaustive list):

- Fees per day per interpreter
- Management and handling fee
- Currency of quotation/tender



- Terms of payment
- Pay review clause (for contracts covering more than one year)
- Cancellation clause

Where interpreters have to travel away from home, the tender should include:

- Daily subsistence allowance
- Compensation for travel time
- Travel to and from venue (train/plane, class of travel etc.)

Conference interpreters are usually contracted by the day. Because of the tremendous concentration required, interpreters work in teams of two or more per output language.

Interpreters fees include preparation time, as well as statutory taxes and social security contributions. The fees should cover the duration of the event (even when they are on standby) as they cannot accept alternative work for these dates.

Local interpreters are usually given priority in recruitment, provided they have the required languages and level of skill. Where language combinations are not available locally, the service provider may have to import some staff. The client should budget to cover this.

Contract award criteria

Conference interpreting is a demanding intellectual activity, and as such the lowest bid is not necessarily the best. Judging a tender bid using the award criteria below will give best value for money:

Technical merit:

- Project proposal
- Relevant experience and references
- Client service and technical assistance

Quality of the teams proposed:

- Interpreters training, qualifications and experience
- Membership of professional associations and/or accreditation by international organisations
- Quality assurance system

Effectiveness of team composition



- Direct interpreting (not relay through another interpreted language)
- Native speakers working into each language

Price

- Management cost
- Cost-effectiveness

Download the PDF for more detail.

Recommended citation format:

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