

**PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION OF TEXAS**

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS  
TO PROVIDE RELAY ACCESS SERVICES**



**Public Utility Commission of Texas  
William B. Travis Building  
1701 North Congress Avenue  
Austin, Texas 78711**

**Closing Time and Date:  
October 26, 2020  
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## SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION

The Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUCT) is issuing this request for proposals (RFP) for a telecommunications carrier to provide Texas statewide telephone relay access service (TRS or “relay service”) for persons with speech and/or hearing impairments. TRS provides telephone interpreting service for people who can hear and those who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, or speech disabled. TRS makes it possible for persons with hearing impairment or speech disability who may or may not be using special equipment to communicate with hearing persons without special equipment or with other persons with special equipment (e.g. oralist using voice-carryover conversing with a deaf person using a telecommunications device for the deaf (TTY)). The TRS provider selected must provide access to the telecommunications network in Texas equivalent to the access provided to other customers.

The statutes that establish TRS can be found in Texas Utilities Code Chapter 56, Subchapter D (Sections 56.101 *et seq.*). For your convenience, the statutes are available at the following URL: <http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/UT/htm/UT.56.htm#56.101>.

The PUCT's rules concerning TRS are found in Title 16 of the Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 26, Section 26.414. For your convenience, the rule is available at the following URL: <http://www.puc.texas.gov/agency/rulesnlaws/subrules/telecom/26.414/26.414.pdf>

## SECTION 2 – DEFINITIONS

As used in this RFP, the following terms have the meanings specified:

- 1) “**Business day**” means a day the PUCT is open for business and is not observing a holiday.
- 2) “**Commission**” means the governing body of the PUCT.
- 3) “**Contractor**” or “**EM&V Contractor**” means the person, organization, business entity, or other entity that is selected for the contract contemplated by this RFP.
- 4) Unless specifically defined otherwise in a section of this RFP or specifically described as a “business day”, a “**day**” means a calendar day.
- 5) “**May**” means “is authorized to.”
- 6) “**Proposer**” means “a person, organization, business entity, or other entity that submits a proposal for this RFP.”
- 7) “**PUCT**” means “the Public Utility Commission of Texas, an agency of the state of Texas.”
- 8) “**Vendor**” means “a person, organization, business entity, or other entity that has been selected for or entered into a contract with a Texas state agency.”
- 9) “**Vendor Performance Tracking System**” means “the system the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts is required to provide under Section 2262.055, Texas Government Code, for evaluating vendor performance.” The Vendor Performance Tracking System is located at: <http://txsmartbuy.com/vpts>

- 10) Unless specifically defined otherwise in a section of this RFP, a “**week**” means seven consecutive calendar days.
- 11) “**Average Speed Answer (“ASA”)**” - the average amount of time between the point at which the call hits the first measurable switch point to the point at which a relay agent is dedicated to the call and ready to render assistance or accept information necessary to process the call.
- 12) “**Captioning Telephone Voice Carry Over (“VCO”)**” – a service that allows a person with a Captel telephone to both hear the other person and display captions of what the other party in the conversation is saying.
- 11) “**Conversation Minutes**” – the time that all three parties (caller, called party, and relay agent) are connected during a relay call, calculated on a per-minute basis of usage. The called party can include answering machines, answering services, voicemail, voice menus, etc. Time spent beginning a call, time between calls, or time spend ending a call when only the relay agent and one other party are connected is not included in conversation minutes.
- 12) “**Desirable Services**” - relay service that the PUC does not require the TRS provider to provide but that in some manner improves relay service provision requirements specified in this RFP.
- 13) “**Emergency calls**” – calls that would normally be routed to a 911 operator.
- 14) “**Mandatory Services**” – required relay service features that the Relay Texas service provider must make available. Proposers must adhere to mandatory service specifications in providing the TRS.
- 15) “**Standardized Rate of Service**” – one standardized rate for TRS for mandatory services specified-.
- 16) “**Telephone Relay Access Service (“TRS” or “relay service”)**” – makes it possible for persons with a hearing loss or speech disability who may or may not be using special equipment to communicate with other persons with special equipment.
- 17) “**Texas Universal Service Fund (TUSF)**” – the fund established by Texas law in Texas Utilities Code Chapter 56, Subchapter D (Section 56.101 et seq) from which payment is made to compensate the TRS provider. The TUSF administrator will make monthly payments, as provided by the contract, to the TRS provider after the PUCT approves each invoice.
- 18) “**TRS Account Manager**” – the individual responsible for all relay services within the State of Texas, including all subcontracted relay services provided by this contract,
- 19) “**Voice Response Unit (VRU)**” – an automated telephone answering system that allows the caller to navigate through a series of prerecorded messages and use a menu of options through the buttons on a touch-tone telephone or through voice recognition.

## **SECTION 3 – STATEMENT OF WORK**

### **I. Management Requirements**

- A. The TRS Account Manager must be stationed at a relay center in Texas. The TRS Account Manager must be responsible for TRS in Texas only, including all subcontracted relay services provided by this contract.
- B. The TRS center or centers must be located in Texas. However, the TRS provider may reroute up to twenty percent of the total traffic to its relay centers in other states if necessary, to meet required Average Speed Answer (ASA). In addition, the TRS provider may reroute up to 100% of emergency calls to other relay centers, including relay centers in different states if necessary.
- C. Up to 100% of Desirable Services may be provided from outside of Texas if the proposal clearly shows:
  - 1. The method used to ensure that these services will be continuously monitored, assessed for quality control, and managed to ensure that each subcontracted service will maintain the same level of quality as other in-state services required by the Texas TRS contract;
  - 2. The services are provided more cost effectively from locations outside Texas as compared to being located inside of Texas.
- D. Although it is a Mandatory Service, up to 100% of Captioning Telephone Voice Carry Over (VCO) service may be provided from outside of Texas if the proposal clearly shows:
  - 1. The method used to ensure that these services will be continuously monitored, assessed for quality control, and managed to ensure that each subcontracted service will maintain the same level of quality as other in-state services required by the Texas TRS contract;
  - 2. The services are provided more cost effectively from locations outside Texas as compared to being located inside of Texas.

### **II. Service Categories**

- A. Proposers must use the service categories when submitting proposals. See Section V.II. of this Statement of Work for pricing definitions and instructions. All prices must be in conversation minutes.
- B. Mandatory – Proposers must adhere to these service categories in providing the TRS, unless proposer clearly explains any exceptions pursuant to the pricing instructions in Section V.II. of this Statement of Work. The price for all mandatory services must be included in one per-transaction rate for TRS and one per-transaction rate for VCO for the

entire 4-year contract term.

Proposers must offer Captioned VCO telephone service, as part of their proposals.

- C. Exceptions – If a TRS provider plans to deviate from the requirement of any service specifications or is unable to provide mandatory service, the proposer must clearly identify all such deviations or inabilities in the proposal.
- D. Additions – The proposer may propose enhancement features not described in this RFP.

### **III. Mandatory Services**

#### **A. Availability.**

The TRS provider must make the TRS accessible and available for all Texans 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Callers must be able to place calls from anywhere in the world where telecommunications systems exist and from any locations reachable by wireless services (such as cellular telephones) and must be able to use alternative billing arrangements.

#### **B. Compliance with Existing Regulations**

The TRS provider must establish procedures regarding complaints, inquiries, and comments about the TRS, TRS subcontractors, all relay calls contracted through Relay Texas, and all TRS personnel. The TRS provider must ensure that relay callers who wish to register a complaint are able to reach a supervisor or administrator while connected during a relay call. Proposers must also include safeguards for complainant privacy and confidentiality.

The TRS provider must keep records of all complaints, detailed reports specifying the manner in which the contractor responded to the complaint, and records indicating whether the complaint was resolved. The contractor must submit this report monthly and submit an annual report to the PUCT containing all information required by the FCC including the Multiple Average Rate Structure (MARS) report, complaint log report, and others as required by the FCC.

#### **C. Technical Specifications**

1. **Switching System:** The switching system must ensure that no calls are dropped due to technical failure on the part of the TRS provider. Proposers' switching system must be capable of undergoing preventive maintenance while the system is in operation.
2. **Network Configuration:** The TRS provider's transmission circuits must meet or exceed industry interexchange performance standards as identified by the ANSI T1.506-1990, Network Performance — Transmission Specifications for Switched Exchange Access Network standards for circuit loss and noise. Proposers should describe the facilities, telecommunications equipment, and software the proposer will

use in providing TRS, including all subcontracted work. Proposals should include a network design diagram that describes the network configuration to be used. This segment of the proposal should describe how callers will access the service and how the proposer would handle the calls.

3. **Service Expansion:** The TRS provider must be capable of expanding the service in response to increasing demand. Proposers must meet this requirement and must identify any trends likely to increase the demand for relay services during the contract period. The TRS must consistently meet, throughout the contract term, all telephone relay performance standards specified in the Request for Proposals.
4. **Technology Innovation:** Proposers must describe how they plan to use changes and improvements in telecommunications technology to improve relay service.
5. **Uninterruptible Power System:** The relay center or centers must have a back-up system sufficient to allow the centers to operate for a minimum of 12 hours after a power failure. Re-routing to other centers in an emergency situation is acceptable and encouraged but does not replace the back-up system.
6. **Disaster Recovery Plan:** Proposals must include a business recovery plan to recover and restore relay service in the event of a disaster that shuts down relay service. The TRS provider must notify the PUCT Contract Administrator of any disruption in service that lasts more than 30 minutes. The TRS provider must provide such notification within three hours of the time the disruption begins. In its notification of service disruption, the TRS provider must explain how the problem will be corrected and give an approximate time and date when relay service will be in full operation. Additionally, after the service is back in full operation, the TRS Provider must submit a written report on the problem and resolution to the PUCT Contract Administrator. Note: If Average Speed of Answer (ASA) is over 5 seconds due to disasters beyond control of TRS Provider and the TRS Provider requests that the penalty fee be waived, then the TRS Provider must submit to the PUCT Contract Administrator the request for waiver within 7 days of the occurrence. Proposers must enroll in the FCC's Telecommunications Service Priority (TSP) program and continue to operate telephone relay services in the event of terrorist acts.

#### D. Service Standards

1. **Local and Intrastate Toll Calls:** The proposed relay service must provide local and intrastate toll calls.
2. **Interstate Toll Calls:** Proposers must provide interstate relay service. Funding for interstate service will come from the federal government at a rate prescribed by the Federal Communications Commission.
3. **7-1-1 Service:** The TRS must be accessible by dialing 7-1-1. The TRS provider must use a Voice Response Unit (VRU) to answer 7-1-1 dialed calls. The VRU will answer with a brief voice interactive menu to give hearing persons an opportunity to press a button to connect to a relay agent to make a voice call. If there is no selection

detected, the call will automatically transfer to TTY mode. The TRS Provider must use automatic number identification (ANI) to brand the calls based on the device used for future relay calls from the same ANI. The User Database configured by relay user (including hearing persons) must override ANI branding. The TRS Provider must then reroute 7-1-1 calls to the relay user's preferred 8xx number (such as VCO, TTY, STS, etc). The TRS provider shall continue to provide 8XX relay. The TRS provider must provide a monthly report showing how many relay calls are initiated by 7-1-1 and 8XX users.

4. Automatic Branding: Proposers must include automatic branding as follows:
  - (i) when a relay user calls Relay Texas through 7-1-1, automatic number identification (ANI) will automatically brand the telephone number to 7-1-1 for future use;
  - (ii) the next time a relay user uses the same telephone number, the ANI will automatically provide the requested type of call:
  - (iii) if the relay user uses a different type of call, then ANI will brand the telephone number with the new type of call for future use.
5. User Database and Relay User Input. To assist in making relay calls more efficient, proposers must provide a database of users' call preferences such as type of call, billing information, speed dialing, slow typing, carrier of choice, etc. This information, once provided by the relay user must appear on the agent screen when a user calls the relay center from the registered ANI. Relay users must be able to provide their database information to the relay provider via mail, fax, and Internet. Note: If a relay user states a preference for a type of call, such as American Standard Code Information Interchange (ASCII), Voice Carryover (VCO), Speech-To-Speech (STS), etc. this preference will override the automatic branding. A different relay user may use the telephone number with permanent branding, but must be able to ask for a different type of call. The permanent branding remains effective until the relay user specifically requests that the TRS provider's agent change the user's preference in the database.
6. Usage. The proposer must not place restrictions on the length or number of calls placed by customers through the TRS, even during peak times.
7. Access to Automated System. Proposed services must allow users (including but not limited to TTY, VCO, ASCII, Hearing-Carryover (HCO and STS)) to call services in order to send messages. These services can include paging services, voice menus, answering machines, or any other automated system that either records or passes on a voice, text, or electronic messages to the other party.
8. Courtesy and Intercept Messages. Each proposal must provide that after five rings a courtesy message will inform callers that they have reached Relay Texas or, when applicable, the Captioned Telephone service provider. An example of a courtesy message would be "Welcome to Relay Texas. An agent will be with you shortly."

- Appropriate intercept messages must also be provided if there is a system failure or if all relay stations continue to be busy. This message must occur no longer than 30 seconds after the courtesy message has been invoked and may be repeated. Note: An intercept message with a customer waiting on the line will not constitute an answer for the purpose of determining call time. Accordingly, the TRS provider must not bill the time in queue to the TUSF. Busy signals are not allowed, unless related to equipment failure of a third party.
9. Carrier of Choice (COC). The proposed service must allow the relay user to choose his or her preferred interexchange carrier (IXC) when placing toll calls through TRS. The relay agent is not required to offer the option but must describe the option when asked by a relay user. An explanation of COC must be included in all appropriate relay publications. The TRS provider must maintain a list of participating long-distance carriers and share it publicly.
  10. Text and Voice Calls. Each proposer must design its system so that the TRS must be capable of receiving and transmitting voice and text calls that may involve electronic signals, including Baudot code and ASCII standards.
  11. Type of Transmission. The TRS must be able to process relay calls made by digital and analog transmissions, including calls placed using enhanced speed options such as turbocode and dial-through technology as offered by TTY manufacturers, during the contract period. Proposers must specify the type of enhanced speed, if any, to be used in the TRS platform.
  12. Charges for Local Calls. In compliance with the PUCT's Substantive Rule §26.414 (b)(3)(A), local exchange carriers must not impose access charges on calls made through the TRS which originate and terminate within the same toll-free local calling scope.
  13. Extended Area Service (EAS). Each proposer must ensure that relay users are not billed for toll usage when completing EAS calls, including calls made by or to subscribers of optional EAS.
  14. Charges for Intrastate Toll. Proposers must provide a copy of the intrastate toll rates that will be billed to relay users.
  15. Answering Machine and Voice Mail Procedure: The TRS provider must use the following minimum procedures for processing relay calls that reach an answering machine or voice mail.
    - (i) The relay agent must inform the caller when an answering machine or voice mail has been reached. In the event a captioned VCO telephone service provider is handling the call, the captioned VCO telephone service agent must inform the caller when an answering machine or voice mail has been reached and must convey the answering machine or voice mail message to the relay user in its entirety.

- (ii) When the relay caller is a text user and the answering machine or voice mail message is long, the agent may record the message in order to convey it to the relay user in its entirety.
  - (iii) The relay agent must relay the complete outgoing message verbatim including the option for the relay caller to leave a message if stated on the outgoing message.
  - (iv) The relay agent must leave the relay caller's message (voice or text).
  - (v) The relay agent must confirm to the caller that the message has been left.
  - (vi) The relay caller may only be charged for one call (the first call) regardless of the number of calls that are required to retrieve and convey the answering machine message and to leave a message.
16. Voice Menus Procedure: The proposed system must allow relay agents to convey voice menus to the relay user quickly in order to process the relay call as quickly as possible. The TRS provider will charge the relay caller for only one call (the first call) regardless of the number of calls that may be required to retrieve and convey the voice menu message.
17. One-Line Answering Machine or Voice Mail Retrieval: The proposed system must allow a relay user to call Relay Texas to retrieve voice messages from answering machines or voice mail without connecting to the third party. The proposed system must allow the relay agent to record messages from answering machines or voice mail and then relay the message to the caller. The proposed system must provide for deletion of the recorded message once the relay call is completed.
18. Number Verification and Identification of Calls. The proposed system must provide a text relay user with the number dialed and identify the type of call (local, long distance, toll free) made. This will help users know if a number has been misdialed and be aware whether the call is local, long distance, or toll free.
19. Access to 9xx and 8xx Pay-Per-Call Services: The proposed system must allow access to and end-user billing for 9xx and 8xx number pay-per-calls. The proposal must identify how the system will determine if the end user's phone number is blocked from making such calls. The 50% discount rates for intrastate relay calls do not apply to these calls.
20. Access to Restricted 8xx Numbers: The proposed system must allow access to regionally restricted 8xx numbers by local relay users in cities or towns where relay centers are outside these regions.
21. Directory Assistance: The proposed system will allow users to access local and long-distance directory assistance through the TRS. Local directory assistance calls must be billed to end users at the same rates (or less) that are billed by the local company serving the end user. Long distance directory assistance calls must be billed at the

proposer's tariffed rate or at the tariffed rate of the carrier used for long distance directory and only conversation minutes used in the call will be compensated.

22. Emergency Calls: The proposed system must include appropriate procedures for handling emergency calls in the shortest possible time. Proposers must offer a system for incoming emergency calls that, at a minimum, automatically and immediately transfers the caller to an appropriate Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP). An appropriate PSAP is either a PSAP that the caller would have reached if he had dialed 911 directly, or a PSAP that is capable of enabling the dispatch of emergency services to the caller in an expeditious manner. Proposers must explain any exception to a fully electronic transfer of emergency calls.
23. Blockage Rate (Mandatory): The proposed system must not allow a caller to receive a busy signal. The proposed system must utilize a queue service when a busy signal is detected, unless it is related to an equipment failure of a third party.
24. Average Answer Time: Proposed average speed of answer (ASA) times must not exceed 5 seconds in a single 24-hour period. This includes special services such as STS, STS/VCO, Captioning Telephone VCO, etc. The TRS provider must measure this deliverable by sampling the ASA a minimum of once every 30 minutes for each 24-hour period. ASA shall be measured from the time the call hits the first measurable switch point to the point at which a relay agent is dedicated to the call and ready to render assistance or accept information necessary to process the call.
25. Caller-ID: The proposed system must display a caller's telephone number on the called party's Caller ID. Proposers must describe how they will provide this feature. Caller ID options, such as blocking or anonymous call rejection must be provided.
26. ASCII Split Screen: The proposed system must provide a "Split-screen" for relay agents handling ASCII calls upon a caller's request.

E. Service Specifications.

1. Proposers must address each of the following service specifications in their proposals, describing the functionality they will provide in each category and providing enough detail to allow reviewers to understand precisely how the proposed system will provide the following services:
  - (i) Voice Carryover (VCO)
  - (ii) Two-Line VCO (2LVCO)
  - (iii) Hearing Carryover (HCO)
  - (iv) Two-Line HCO (2LHCO)
  - (v) Modes for VCO and HCO

- (vi) The proposed system must allow VCO and HCO users to utilize both TTY modes: acoustic mode and direct connect mode. The proposed system also must allow VCO relay users to set up a call using voice communication without the TTY transmission that is normally required to set up the relay call.
- (vii) Flexibility in Using VCO and HCO: The proposed system must provide VCO and HCO upon request of the relay user if either VCO or HCO 800 numbers are not used by the person placing the call.
- (viii) Releasing Relay Call - TTY to TTY: The proposed system must allow a call that began as a voice-user to TTY call to become a TTY to TTY call. Note: Once the user releases a relay call, the TRS provider shall not bill the remainder of the call time to the TUSF.
- (ix) Speech-To-Speech Relay Service for Speech Disabled (STS)
- (x) Speech-to-Speech Relay Service for Persons with Hearing Loss with Speech Understandable by Trained Relay Agents (STS/VCO)
- (xi) Slow Typing for Deaf-Blind and Visually Impaired Users: Agents shall type at a slower speed for Deaf-Blind and Visually Impaired relay users. The agent must maintain the typing speed throughout the call, in order to maintain efficiency.
- (xii) Default Typing Speed for Deaf-Blind 800 number: The proposed system must have a default buffer typing speed of 15 words per minute when a caller uses an 800 number for deaf-blind or visually impaired persons. The relay agent may type at a normal pace, but the text will come across to the users at a rate of 15 words per minute. This service must allow the user to request increased or decreased rates of the transmission of text in increments of 5 words per minute.
- (xiii) Spanish Translation: The proposed system must provide both Spanish-only and translation services: Spanish to Spanish, Spanish to English, or English to Spanish.
- (xiv) Unique 8xx and 9xx Telephone Numbers for Services: The proposed system must provide a separate 800 for each of these services: TTY, ASCII, VCO, STS, STS/NCO, Captioning Telephone VCO (incoming calls from hearing parties), Spanish, Reduced Typing Speed, and 8xx/9xx Pay-Per-Call.
- (xv) Existing 8xx Telephone Numbers: The proposed system will use existing Relay Texas 8xx numbers for VCO, HCO, STS, Reduced Typing Speed, STSVCO, 2LVCO, ASCII, 8xx/9xx Pay-Per-Call, Voice, TTY, and Captioning Telephone VCO.

## F. Relay Agent Specifications

Each proposer must address the following agent specifications in their proposals, describing how it will fulfill the requirements with enough detail to allow reviewers to understand precisely how the proposer plans to staff relay services.

1. **Identification of Relay Agent — Gender and Number:** Each relay agent who processes Relay Texas calls, TRS, and captioned telephone VCO service will be assigned an identification number. When answering a relay call, the relay agent will answer with his or her number and gender identification such as: "RTX 105M". The relay caller must be able to request an agent of a specific gender identification.
2. **Confidentiality:** TRS must be provided in a manner that ensures confidentiality regarding existence and content of conversation as required by applicable laws. The TRS Provider must outline disciplinary and termination procedures in writing if relay agents violate confidentiality laws. Chapter 82 of the Texas Human Resources Code (as amended) contains confidentiality requirements for relay agents and interpreters and may be found at the following URL:  
<http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/HR/htm/HR.82.htm>.
3. **Relay Agent Training:** TRS Relay agent training must include instruction on proper translation and interpretation of typed ASL (ASL gloss and ASL grammar), information about deaf culture, and information about the needs of hard-of-hearing, speech-disabled, and deaf-blind users. Training must involve simulated call handling. Appropriate parts of agent training must be provided by persons from the deaf, hard-of-hearing, speech-disabled, and deaf-blind communities with expertise in the field of language interpreting ASL. A minimum of three days (24 hours) of training should be focused on understanding basic American Sign Language. New relay agents may not be changed from probationary status to regular status employees prior to showing a basic understanding of written ASL gloss for a minimum of three months. Proposers must describe how they will provide increased oversight to probationary agents.
4. **Relay Agent Counseling:** The proposal must outline counseling and support programs to assist TRS and CTS VCO relay agents in dealing with the emotional aspects of relaying calls. The programs must maintain confidentiality as required above.
5. **Procedures for Relaying Communication:** All relay agents must convey the full content, context, and intent of the relayed communication style being translated. Throughout the phone call, relay agents must strive to maintain functional equivalency to a standard (non-TRS) phone call. All secondary activities that would normally be known to a hearing person engaged in a telephone conversation must be relayed whenever possible. Unless the relay user requests otherwise, the agent must relay all calls according to the following procedures:
  - (i) **Circumstances under which a relay agent explains the relay service:** When a non-text user receives a relay call, the TRS relay agent will ask whether he or she has previously used TRS. If such user has used TRS before, the call will be processed

without further delay. If not, the relay agent will explain how the service operates and will notify the text relay user, using parentheses that TRS is being explained. The TRS explanation will be brief and concise. A suggested format is: "The person who is calling you is either deaf or speech-disabled. The caller is typing a conversation, which will be read to you. When you hear the words "Go Ahead," it will be your turn to speak. Please speak directly to the caller. Everything that is heard will be typed to them. One moment for your call to begin." When a non-text relay user initiates a call to Relay Texas, the relay agent will NOT ask whether he or she has previously used TRS unless it is obvious to the relay agent that the relay user does not know how to use TRS. If proposers have another explanation other than above suggestion, please note the explanations in the proposal. If there is more than one explanation to meet specific features of TRS callers (made from VCO, HCO, or other TRS features) please note those as well.

- (ii) The originating relay user retains full control of the call: The caller must have the option of telling the relay agent what aspects of the call she or he will handle. For example, a text relay caller may request that he or she introduce relay services to the called party, rather letting the relay agent do the introduction.
- (iii) Relay agents must maintain a neutral position: Relay agents must not counsel, advise, or interject personal opinions or additional information during a relay call, even if the relay communication breaks down. An exception to this occurs when either the relay caller or called party requests assistance from a relay agent or during an emergency call. Even then, a neutral position must be maintained to the extent possible. Relay agents must not offer any advice based on personal judgments regarding the content of any relay communication (i.e., "Don't do what he is asking you to do" or "he's trying to rip you off"). Relay agents must not have a personal conversation with anyone who calls the TRS at any time, except to extend a polite and concise response when prompted, such as "thank you" if a relay user comments on a job well done.
- (iv) Relay agents must keep both parties informed on the status of the relay call: This information includes, but is not limited to, an indication of such signals as dialing, ringing, busy, disconnected, recording, fax sound, or holding. Captioned telephone VCO relay agents must keep CTS VCO users informed regarding the status of a call, including but not limited to an indication of such signals as dialing, ringing, busy, disconnected, recording, fax sound, or holding.
- (v) To the extent possible, the relay agent must identify to the text and CTS VCO relay user whether the hearing or voice user is female or male by using parentheses at the beginning of a call as follows: "(M)" or "(F)"
- (vi) All comments directed to either party by the relay agent must be relayed to the other party. For example, if the relay agent asks a hearing party, "Will you accept a collect call?" these words must be relayed to the text and CTS VCO relay user in parentheses. Likewise, all comments directed to the relay agent by either party must be relayed. For example, if a text relay user types, "Yes, I will accept the

charges," these words will be relayed to the other relay party as "(The party says, `Yes, I will accept the charges.`)."

- (vii) Relay agents must, to the best of their abilities, convey to the text and CTS VCO relay user the voice relay user's tone of voice. Whenever possible, characterizing of tone of voice will first be conveyed with descriptive words such as "yelling," "crying," "loud," "quiet," or "foreign accent." These words must be in parenthesis. If it is clear to the relay agent that the tone of voice is more emotional than the descriptive sound words can provide, then relay agent can type something such as "(sounds angry)" in addition to the descriptive sound words if it makes conversation clearer. Such descriptions and other similar utterances must be in parentheses, preceded by the word "sounds." Relay agents may also be creative in the ways that they convey the hearing person's vocalizations to the text user. If the voice Relay User "groans" or "hums" these could be relayed as "OOOhh" or "hmmm." An excited "yes" may be relayed as "yesss!!!". The TRS and CTS VCO Provider must provide training in voice tone conveyances as part of the overall agent training.
- (viii) When the relay agent verbalizes for the text relay user, the agent must adopt a conversational tone of voice appropriate to the type of call being made. If a text user types an expression (for example "OOOh") the relay agent must verbalize accordingly.
- (ix) The relay agent must identify background noise (e.g. "baby crying," "music," and "coughing") to the text and CTS VCO relay user whenever possible.
- (x) There must be no censorship or omission by relay agents in any situation. Relay agents must convey everything, including profanity, to the other party.

#### G. Relay Agent Skills and Proficiency

The TRS provider must ensure that no relay agent who, within the training period, lacks the skills listed in the following subsections will be used as a relay agent, with the few exceptions as noted.

1. Relay agents must possess 12th grade level spelling skills. The TRS provider must appropriately test applicants to determine grade level spelling skill. The PUCT Contract Administrator may request that the TRS provider submit reports on relay agent spelling skills and the TRS provider must comply within a reasonable period of time not to exceed 30 days.
2. TRS relay agents must be able to type at a speed of 60 words per minute (wpm) for five minutes by the first day of actual relay agent work. These relay agents must be tested every six months to ensure that the 60-wpm for five minutes standard (voice to text) is maintained. These periodic tests must simulate actual working conditions and must not be standard typing tests. Tests should be modified with sufficient frequency to ensure that relay agents cannot "learn" the test. The PUCT Contract Administrator

may request that the TRS provider submit reports on relay agent typing speed scoring, and the TRS provider must comply within a reasonable period of time not to exceed 30 days.

3. The relay agent's speech must be clear and easily understood by hearing relay users.
4. In order to assist in clearer understanding between the two parties, relay agents must translate the typed languages of relay users whose primary language may be ASL or whose written English language skills are limited to grammatically correct conversational English, unless the text user instructs otherwise. If a text user instructs the relay agent to type verbatim, the agent must follow such instructions.
5. During all shifts, TRS relay agents fluent in Spanish must be available to provide translation when one or both relay users communicate in Spanish. Most Spanish speakers in Texas are familiar with the Spanish spoken in Mexico. Therefore, proposers must explain how they will ensure agents can speak with accent, idiom, and other language characteristics used in Spanish spoken in Mexico so that their speech will be understandable by Spanish-speaking Texas Relay users and so that they will accurately relay communications by Spanish-speaking Texas Relay users.

#### H. TRS and CapTel Audits

The contractor will be responsible for engaging an independent auditor to conduct the audits specified below. The audits must be completed within 90 calendar days after the fiscal year has ended (August 31st). The contractor must receive the Relay Administrator's written approval of the audit firm and of the proposed scope of work before the audit begins.

1. Years One and Three – The contractor must engage an independent auditor to conduct a SSAE Type II audit on administrative and operational procedures for the fiscal years ending August 31, 2021, and August 31, 2023.
2. Year Two and Four – The contractor must engage an independent auditor to conduct quality assurance audits on all aspects of relay service delivery covered by the contract to determine whether the expected level of service is being met. The scope of these audits must include, but is not limited to, the following performance criteria:
  - (i) Typing speed and captioning speed
  - (ii) Typing accuracy and captioning accuracy
  - (iii) Average accuracy with and without corrections
  - (iv) Reason for errors
  - (v) Average connect time
  - (vi) Conversation minute length

- I. The cost of these audits must be billed as a separate line item on the relay service invoice and will be paid from USF funds. Upon completion of each audit, the contractor must provide the auditor's written report with management response to the PUCT. The written report must include all processes and procedures that were examined and the results of the examination.

#### **IV. Outreach**

##### **A. Budget**

The TUSF will reimburse the TRS provider up to \$75,000 per year (beginning December 1, 2020) for outreach and promotional items to Texas localities including up to \$10,000 per year for website development and maintenance. Proposers must commit to performing outreach activities, describe sample outreach activities, and commit to monthly reporting. Monthly reporting can be part of the monthly invoice as noted in Exhibit G. The TRS provider must coordinate or provide annual Relay Texas outreach projects including but not limited to: a Relay Texas website; participation in events that provide disability-related information for people with hearing or speech loss; promotional giveaways with Relay Texas logo; and promoting general public awareness.

##### **B. Annual Approval**

The TRS provider annually must outline costs and activities for each outreach project and submit them to the PUCT Contract Administrator for review.

##### **C. Promotional Items**

The TRS provider must work closely with the PUCT Contract Administrator in designing, developing, and approving promotional items intended to educate Texans about Relay Texas and thus bring its services to all potential users. These items may include but are not limited to brochures, giveaways, and videos (informational or training).

##### **D. Website Development and Maintenance**

The TRS provider must maintain a Relay Texas web site accessible by and useful to consumers in order to provide pertinent relay service information including service provider contact information. The TRS provider must work closely with the PUCT Contract Administrator in designing, developing, and approving website information intended to educate Texans about Relay Texas. The relay service contract manager must report all updates and changes to the website to the PUCT Relay Administrator as they occur. The website must be operational by December 1, 2020. Costs incurred will be reimbursed up to \$5,000 per year.

## V. Reporting Requirements

**Proposers must address each of the following reporting specifications in their proposals, giving enough detail to allow technical reviewers to understand precisely how the proposer will provide the required service or information.**

### A. Mandatory Records Maintenance

1. The TRS provider must maintain its records of all relay operations to permit the review and confirmation of TRS and CTS VCO data as well as other data by the PUCT Contract Administrator.
2. The TRS Provider must report enough information to local exchange companies to enable them to meet the statutory prohibition on charging access charges on calls that originate and terminate within the same local calling area.

### B. Monthly Reports

**The following are mandatory monthly reports. (Refer to Attachment D for formatted copies of mandatory reports from May 2020.)**

1. Invoice Cover Signature and Invoice Charges Summary
2. Invoice Details of Compensation and Statistics
3. Invoice Charges Summary
  - (i) Part One of the Invoice Charges Summary must be based on the data from Invoice Page Two. Part One must be a single page and have the minimal necessary expense information that will ultimately be submitted to the Texas USF Administrator. Part One must contain the following information:
    - (a) Total requested service compensation
    - (b) Total amount due based on standardized price per minute for contracted TRS and VCO services.
    - (c) Outreach expenses
    - (d) ASA Non-Compliance Penalty – total credit amount for the invoice.
    - (e) Total amount due
    - (f) Certification of statement's and charges' accuracy
    - (g) Signature lines for TRS contract administrator and PUCT Contract Administrator.
  - (ii) Part Two of the Invoice Charges Summary must provide detail and statistics

supporting Part One. The following items must be included for all services provided based upon this Statement of Work provided:

- (a) Total conversation minutes, which include local, intrastate, interstate, international and toll-free calls.
  - (b) Total non-billable conversation minutes (to include interstate and international calls, calls to 8XX and 9XX numbers, including toll free calls) which must be deducted from the total conversation minutes to produce total billable minutes.
  - (c) Total billable minutes
  - (d) Price per minute of service
  - (e) Subtotal of service compensation (billable minutes multiplied by price-per-minute of service)
  - (f) Publicity and Outreach Expense
  - (g) Total Credit Amount due based on ASA Non-Compliance Penalty fees, including identification of the month against which the penalty fees were assessed with a copy of the letter from the PUCT on the Non-Compliance Penalty Fee attached.
  - (h) Total service Compensation
4. Account Summary – Summary of charges incurred and outstanding balances (if any).
  5. Traffic Report – Conversation Minutes
  6. Attempted Calls Breakdown
  7. Speech to Speech (S2S) Statistics
  8. Texas Traffic Pattern Statistics with TRS and CTS statistics provided separately
  9. Call Detail Report with TRS and CTS information provided separately
  10. Calls to Relay by Device. This report must include the total number of monthly TRS outbound calls handled to each type of device, percent of total calls by device, total minutes of service by device, average length of call for each type of device, average speed of agent interaction for each type of device, total TRS inbound for each type of device, total TRS inbound for each type of device by Spanish-speaking users, total TRS inbound by English-speaking users, and total TRS inbound by all users and all devices. The devices to be included are those in the following list:
    - (i) Calls to Relay Texas by device:

- (a) TTY Baudot calls
- (b) Turbocode
- (c) ASCII calls
- (d) Voice calls
- (e) Voice carryover calls
- (f) Hearing carryover calls
- (g) Deaf-blind ASCII
- (h) Deaf-blind Baudot
- (i) Speech-to-speech calls by speech-disabled
- (j) Sub-total of each

11. Intrastate/Interstate Report with TRS and Speech-to-Speech (S2S) information provided separately.

12. Average Speed of answer

13. Average Length of Call Report

14. S2S Call Summary

15. Year-to-Date charges and payments

16. Checklist of Deliverables

- (i) Number of billable calls (local, intrastate, toll-free, and directory assistance calls)
- (ii) Average length of outbound calls in conversation minutes
- (iii) Average length of conversation minutes of completed relay calls
- (iv) Average call set-up and wrap-up time as a percentage of length of completed calls (session minutes)
- (v) Monthly average speed of answer

17. Monthly Minutes of Service, Calls Handled, and Percentage Report

The Monthly Minutes of Service, Calls Handled, and Percentage Reports provide data supporting the charges shown on the invoice, including a breakdown of TRS and CTS VCO total minutes of service, total calls handled, and percentage of billable calls

handled to total calls handled. The following three reports must be provided on one page:

(i) Monthly Summary Detail Record (Billable Minutes Account Summary)

(a) Totals must include: minutes of services; total number of calls handled; deductions from sub-total, including non-billable minutes of service; total number of calls handled, and percent of calls handled to total calls handled. These deductions must be subtracted from the subtotal to create total billable call data. Totals to be included are total billable minutes of service, total number of calls handled, and percent of billable calls handled to total calls handled.

(b) Monthly Detail of Billable Data – The total minutes of service, total number of calls handled must be included on the monthly invoice with respect to TRS and CTS VCO serviced provided in the order listed below:

(1) Local

(2) Intrastate

(3) Intrastate toll-free

(4) 8XX and 9XX pay-per-call

(5) Intrastate directory assistance

(6) Emergency

(7) Sub-totals of minutes of service, total call, and total percentage.

(c) Monthly Detail of Non-Billable Data – Unless otherwise stated, the following items will be included on the invoice in the order listed: total minutes of service, total number of calls handled:

(1) Interstate

(2) Interstate toll-free

(3) 8XX and 9XX pay-per-call

(4) International

(5) Interstate Directory Assistance

(6) Interstate busy/ring/no answer

(7) General Assistance

(8) Intrastate busy/no answer

(9) Subtotals of minutes of service.

18. Average Speed of Answer

19. To allow the PUCT to verify the information included in the invoice and the average speed of answer, the TRS provider must attach call detail reports from the switch to the invoice.

20. Reporting discrepancies, errors, and misconduct

**Contractor must provide a detailed explanation of any discrepancies or errors uncovered in a review of the monthly data provided in the monthly invoice**

(i) If the PUCT requires any corrective action arising from audit reports, Contractor must provide a monthly status report to the PUCT Contract Administrator addressing any corrective action arising from audit reports. This information must include, but is not limited to, the status of actions regarding billing or data reporting errors.

(ii) Contractor must provide notification to the PUCT Contract Administrator of actual or suspected waste, fraud, abuse, or other potential misconduct in writing within seven working days of discovery.

21. Annual Reports - Report on Texas Relay activities from previous years, proposed outreach activities for next fiscal year, all FCC complaint Logs and MARS reports.

## VI. PUCT Contract Monitoring Activities

A. PUCT Contract Administrator will use the required reports to monitor contractor performance monthly.

B. Additionally, the PUCT Contract Administrator may conduct the following monitoring activities, as deemed appropriate by the Contract Administrator:

1. Make random calls to ensure the calls are answered appropriately and within the ASA time.
2. Monthly meetings with the Relay contract administrator to go over call statistics, outreach activities and any potential concerns.
3. This list is not intended to be an exhaustive list of monitoring activities. The PUCT Contract Administrator may monitor the TRS provider's performance in other ways deemed appropriate by the PUCT Contract Administrator.

C. Delay or failure by the PUCT contract administrator to identify contract noncompliance in the monitoring activities does not relieve the TRS provider from performance in

compliance with the contract, nor does it waive any remedies available to the PUCT.

D. If the TRS provider is not meeting performance standards, the PUCT may, in its sole discretion:

1. Issue warnings regarding the need for performance improvement;
2. Institute a corrective action plan with additional requirements designed to ensure the contractor improves performance in order to meet the requirements of the contract, with a deadline, after which the PUCT may choose to terminate the contract for cause, if the contractor fails to make the required improvements and meet the requirements of the corrective action plan.

E. Warnings and corrective action plans do not replace or preclude any other remedies available to the PUCT under this contract or the law.

## VII. Pricing Proposal

Proposers must submit their pricing proposals based on the following instructions and assumptions. Proposers are solely responsible for seeking clarification and asking questions concerning these instructions and assumptions.

- A. Conversation Minutes – Conversation minutes must be timed to the tenth of a second (or less) for each relay call. The total number of conversation minutes for each 24-hour period may be rounded up to the nearest second. (See the definition of “Conversation Minutes” in Section I. of this Statement of Work for additional instruction regarding calculation of Conversation Minutes.)
- B. Standardized Rate of Service – In determining standardized rates for mandatory services, there must be no “minimum minutes” required to provide the service with the rates specified. (See the definition of “Standardized Rate of Service” in Section I. of this Statement of Work for additional instruction regarding calculation of Standardized Rate of Service.)
- C. The Proposal Pricing Package – The proposal pricing package must contain pricing for mandatory services to be considered responsive. Proposers who wish to include enhancements in their proposal may do so. Proposers must identify pricing for any enhancements or features included in the pricing proposal.
- D. The total four-year estimated Billable Conversation Minutes to use for pricing proposal purposes are:
  1. TRS: 600,000
  2. VCO: 1,450,000

**These numbers are intended to serve as estimates for information purposes only and are not intended to serve as a limitation or guarantee of conversation minutes for the contemplated contract.**

**Proposers are encouraged to offer alternative pricing methodology in addition to the per conversation minute method.**

## **SECTION 4 – ELIGIBILITY AND EVALUATION CRITERIA**

### **4.A. EEO and HUB Statement**

The PUCT is an equal employment opportunity employer and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, veteran status, age, or disability in employment or in the provision of services. This commitment extends to proposers, vendors, and their employees as well.

The PUCT encourages Historically Underutilized Businesses (HUBs) to compete for this award.

### **4.B. Minimum Eligibility Requirements**

4.B.1. Proposers must have a minimum of five years' experience providing services similar to those described in Section 3 – Statement of Work (SOW). An entity or company with fewer than ten years' experience is eligible to submit a proposal if key personnel on the proposal team (including subcontractors) have the minimum required experience. Proposers who do not meet this requirement are not eligible for award.

4.B.2. Under Texas law, vendors may be barred from participating in state contracts that are subject to Texas Government Code Chapter 2155, Subchapter B (General Purchasing Requirements, Procedures, and Programs). TEX. GOV'T. CODE § 2155.077. If a proposer is barred from participating in state contracts, its proposal will be disqualified and will receive no further consideration.

4.B.3. The PUCT is required to purchase goods and services that provide the best value to the state. TEX. GOV'T. CODE § 2155.074. To that end, the PUCT will review information in the statewide Vendor Performance Tracking System regarding proposers' past performance. Any of the following conditions may result in a proposer being disqualified from consideration for this RFP:

- having a score of less than a C in the Vendor Performance Tracking System;
- currently being under a corrective action plan through the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts;
- having repeated negative Vendor Performance Reports for the same or similar reason; or
- having purchase orders that have been cancelled in the previous 12 months for non-performance (for example, late delivery or failing to meet quality standards).

### **4.C. Evaluation Criteria**

The PUCT will make the selection and award on the basis of the proposal substance and the proposer's demonstrated knowledge and competence to provide the services described in Section

3, Statement of Work. A description of the categories under which each proposal will be judged, and the percentage of weight given to each category are as follows:

- **Proposal Substance – 40%**
  - Proposal demonstrates a clear understanding of the objectives, as described in Section 3 – Statement of Work.
  - Proposed approach is both thorough and practical.
  - Proposed approach for meeting objectives is desirable.
  - Conditions included in the proposal are acceptable.
- **Competence and Knowledge – 40%**
  - Competence and experience are demonstrated by the qualifications described in the proposal.
  - Management structure is well-suited to the objectives described in Section 3 – Statement of Work.
  - The proposer has the capacity and financial resources to perform the contract and meet deadlines without delay or interference.
  - The proposal demonstrates the team’s qualifications and experience, drawing on lessons learned and best practices.
  - Assigned staffing for prime and subcontractors is desirable to meet the objectives described in Section 3 – Statement of Work.
- **Proposed Compensation – 20%**

#### 4.D. Texas Vendor Preference

All other factors being equal, preference will be given to a proposer who meets one or more of the following criteria:

- Proposer is incorporated in Texas;
- Proposer’s principal place of business is in Texas; or
- Proposer has an established physical presence in Texas.

Proposers who may qualify for the Texas Vendor Preference should provide information establishing the applicable criteria as part of the proposal package.

#### 4.E. References

The PUCT may check references as part of the evaluation process. Information gained through reference checks can be used as grounds for disqualification of a proposal if the information casts doubt upon the ability of the proposer to successfully meet the objectives of the RFP. However, any information obtained through a reference check that is discriminatory on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, veteran status, age, or disability will not be considered.

## **SECTION 5 – SCHEDULE AND PROCESS**

### **5.A. Anticipated Schedule**

**Disclaimer:** Dates are subject to change at the PUCT’s discretion. Changes to proposer deadlines will be posted on the Electronic State Business Daily (ESBD) website and the PUCT’s Procurement webpage, along with any other RFP modifications and addenda. It is the proposer’s responsibility to periodically check the websites prior to submitting a proposal. A proposer’s failure to review additional information posted on the ESBD and PUCT websites will not release the proposer from requirements described in those postings and could result in disqualification of a proposal or additional costs to meet the requirements of the contract should the proposer be selected for the contract.

PUCT Procurement Webpage:

<http://www.puc.texas.gov/agency/about/procurement/Default.aspx>

ESBD Website: <http://www.txsmartbuy.com/esbd>

<b><u>Event</u></b>	<b><u>Anticipated Date</u></b>
RFP Release	September 25, 2020
Last day to submit written questions regarding the RFP	September 30, 2020
Deadline for submission of proposals	October 26, 2020 10 am CT
Post-proposal interviews or presentations, if required	November 2, 2020
Staff recommendation for selection	November 5, 2020
Selection approved	November 6, 2020
Contract negotiations	November 2020
Contract period begins	December 1, 2020

### **5.B. PUCT Contact Person**

Jay Stone, CTCD, CTPM, or his designated substitute, is the only permitted PUCT point of contact regarding this RFP. Contact or attempted contact with other PUCT employees, including commissioners and their staffs, may result in a proposer’s immediate disqualification. Proposers will be notified if circumstances require a designated substitute contact for this RFP.

### **5.C. Process for Asking Questions**

The PUCT will only accept written questions and requests for clarification. Requests must be sent by email to [RFPCorrespondence@puc.texas.gov](mailto:RFPCorrespondence@puc.texas.gov), attention: Jay Stone, CTCD, CTPM. Inquiries and comments must reference RFP No. 473-20-00003.

The PUCT aims to answer all questions within two business days after receipt. Answers to all questions will be provided through an addendum posted on the ESBD and agency procurement websites.

#### 5.D. Process for Submitting Proposals

5.D.1. Proposers must file their sealed proposals in Project Number 51022 with the PUCT's Central Records Division before the stated closing date and time. Proposals will not be considered if received in the Central Records Division after 10:00 am, central time, on October 26, 2020. All required information must be provided at that time. Supplements will only be allowed if information is requested by the PUCT after the closing date of the RFP.

5.D.2. Proposals delivered by fax or email will not be accepted under any circumstances.

5.D.3. The PUCT's Central Records Division is open to the public for filing Monday through Thursday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and Friday from 9:00 a.m. to noon and 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., excluding state holidays. If there is an Open Meeting of the PUCT on a Friday, the Central Records Division will not close between noon and 1:00 p.m. on that day.

5.D.4. The following addresses may be used for delivery to the Central Records Division:

##### **In Person Delivery Address**

Public Utility Commission, Central Records Division  
William B. Travis Building  
1701 North Congress Avenue  
Room 8-100  
Austin, Texas 78701

##### **Mailing Address**

Public Utility Commission, Central Records Division  
Project No. 51022  
P.O. Box 13326  
Austin, Texas 78711-3326

5.D.5. The PUCT will **only** accept the time and date stamp of its Central Records Division as evidence of timely submission. The PUCT will **not** accept the following as evidence of timely submission: a U.S. Postal Service postmark, a mail receipt indicating the date of mailing, a dated shipping label, an invoice or receipt from a commercial carrier, or any other documentation other than the time and date stamp of Central Records on the proposal filing.

5.D.6. Confidential filing is required because this RFP is conducted using a sealed bid process. Confidential filing does not guarantee confidentiality after the RFP has ended and a contract has been executed. Any portion of the proposal considered to be confidential (for example, trade secrets) must be marked with the word, "**CONFIDENTIAL**" in all-caps and bold on each page considered to contain confidential information.

5.D.7. Proposers are advised to seek legal counsel regarding the best way to protect any trade secrets or other proprietary information.

5.D.8. For more information about how the PUCT will respond to PIA requests relating to this RFP, please see Section 7.C. of this RFP, Public Information Act Notice.

### 5.E. PUCT's Standard Process for Selecting Vendors

5.E.1. The PUCT will assemble an evaluation team that will begin proposal evaluation as soon as practicable after the submission deadline. Evaluation team members will score each proposal individually based on the factors of Proposal Substance and Competence and Knowledge, described under Section 4.C. of this RFP, Evaluation Criteria. Maximum point values will be assigned to each scoring factor according to the percentage of weight given to that factor and evaluators will assign a point value up to the maximum allowed for each factor. The purchaser will calculate scoring for compensation. The compensation score will be calculated using the following formula:  $\text{Compensation Score} = (\text{Lowest Price} / \text{Price of Response Being Evaluated}) \times \text{Maximum Number of Available Points for Compensation}$ . Evaluation team members will not have access to compensation information while they are reviewing and scoring the proposals.

5.E.2. After individual scoring, the evaluation team will email their scoring sheets to the purchaser. The purchaser will review the individual scoring sheets and compile a summary scoring sheet combining all evaluation team scoring and including the compensation scoring to calculate overall scores.

5.E.3. After overall scores are calculated, the evaluation team, with guidance from the purchaser, will then take one of the following actions: recommend selection of a specific proposer, gather more information before selecting a specific proposer; or recommend that the RFP be withdrawn or reposted.

5.E.4. If the evaluation team needs more information to make a decision, the PUCT may request any of the following from one or more respondents: additional information or clarification, an oral presentation, or a best and final offer. Additional information, clarification, oral presentations or best and final offers will be used to re-score proposals, based upon the same criteria used to score the initial proposals, unless different criteria is specified by the purchaser when the additional information is requested.

5.E.5. The PUCT may require selected proposers to participate in conference calls, attend meetings in Austin, Texas, give presentations, or participate in all of these activities to provide additional information about their proposals. Any cost associated with any such call, meeting, or presentation will be borne solely by the proposer.

5.E.6. If clarification, presentations, or best and final offers are requested, the evaluation team may request the clarification, presentations, or best and final offers from the top-ranked proposer or proposers only, or all of the proposers, at the discretion of the evaluation team.

5.E.7. Final recommendations will be presented to the Executive Director of the PUCT. The Executive Director may do one of the following: approve the recommended selection in whole or in part; disapprove the recommendation; or defer action on the selection.

5.E.8. The PUCT will begin contract negotiations shortly after the Executive Director approves a recommendation to select a specific proposer. The PUCT may negotiate all portions of any

proposal, including, but not limited to: the proposed fee, a final schedule for performance to be incorporated into the contract, and any terms of the contract.

5.E.9. The PUCT will notify each proposer of the final action taken upon execution of the contract with the selected proposer.

5.E.10. No questions about the status of the proposals will be answered while proposals are under evaluation.

5.E.11. The PUCT may reject any and all proposals, amend this RFP, or cancel this RFP at any time. After the proposal due date, the PUCT will only notify proposers who submitted a proposal prior to the proposal submission deadline of amendments to the RFP.

## **SECTION 6 – REQUIRED COMPONENTS AND FORMAT**

### **6.A. Components**

Proposals must include all required attachments and certifications. The PUCT will not accept attachments or certifications submitted after the proposal deadline. Proposals that do not include all required information will be considered non-responsive and will be disqualified.

Proposals must include the contents described in 6.A.1 through 6.A.10 with each section marked with an index tab. (Index tabs may be affixed directly to the first page of each section or included as part of a divider.)

#### **6.A.1. Statement of the Requirements**

In this section, each proposer must succinctly state its understanding of the RFP's requirements and describe how it would perform the tasks described in Section 3, Statement of Work.

#### **6.A.2. Competence and Knowledge**

Each proposer must provide a detailed work plan to demonstrate how it intends to fulfil the requirements identified in Section 3, Statement of Work. The proposal must include an organizational chart identifying functions and reporting relationships of the personnel who will be assigned to this work. The proposer should also describe any prior experience proposer's organization has in providing similar services.

#### **6.A.3. Qualifications**

For each person a proposer identifies to perform the work described in this RFP, the proposer must provide a detailed resume that describes the services they would perform, their qualifications, and their experience.

#### **6.A.4. Compensation**

Each proposer must propose pricing to provide the services identified in Section 3, Statement of Work.

Compensation for the services identified in Section 3, Statement of Work must be proposed as an hourly rate schedule with an estimated number of hours to complete the tasks required.

Unless otherwise approved in writing by the PUCT, payments will be made based upon the invoicing and payment terms of the resulting contract. The PUCT will not reimburse any out-of-pocket expenses or expenses not contemplated at the time of contract execution.

Proposer must demonstrate how elements of the price correspond to elements of the proposed work plan.

#### 6.A.5. References

Each proposer must provide at least three references. Proposers must include a phone number and email address for each reference.

The PUCT prefers references from clients for whom the proposer has performed similar work, including other state commissions or boards.

Proposers must not use the PUCT or any individuals employed by the PUCT as a reference.

#### 6.A.6. Conflicts Statement

Proposers must be neutral and impartial, must not be an entity that has a specific interest in the PUCT's regulation, and must not have a direct financial interest in the provision of electric, telephone, water, or sewer service in the state of Texas.

Proposers having a conflict of interest, as determined by the PUCT will not be eligible for contract award. Proposers may also be disqualified if there are facts that would create an appearance of impropriety, even if no actual conflict exists.

The PUCT will determine whether a conflict of interest or an appearance of impropriety exists from the perspective of a reasonable person uninvolved in the matters covered by the resulting contract. The PUCT is the sole arbiter of whether a conflict or an appearance of impropriety exists.

The requirements for the conflicts statement are as follows:

- It must be signed and notarized by the highest-ranking officer of proposer's entity having responsibility for vetting corporate conflicts of interest.
- It must identify any personal or business relationships of proposers, including all employees and subcontractors of proposers, with: any electric, telecommunications, water, or sewer utility, or any utility affiliate operating in Texas; any entity having a pending application at the PUCT to enter the Texas retail electric market, telecommunications market, water utility market, or sewer utility market; and any entity likely to have a direct interest or be a participant in the anticipated change-in-control proceedings that are the subject of this RFP. It must identify the extent, nature, and time aspects of those relationships.
- If a proposer does not have any known or potential conflict of interest or appearance of impropriety, the conflicts statement must include a statement that there is no known or potential conflict of interest or appearance of impropriety. Failure to provide either a statement describing potential conflicts of interest or appearances of impropriety or a

statement that no potential conflict or appearance of impropriety exists will automatically disqualify the proposer.

- The conflicts statement must address how the proposer intends to address any known conflicts of interest or appearance of impropriety.
- The conflicts statement must address how the proposer intends to ensure that no interest may arise as a result of its activities or those of its parent, affiliate, or other related entity that will conflict with the proposer's duty should it be selected to provide the services described in Section 3, Statement of Work.
- The conflicts statement must identify a proposer's lobbyists who are registered or required to register with the Texas Ethics Commission and their compensation. The conflicts statement must also describe any involvement the proposer's lobbyists will have in connection with this engagement or electric utility, telecommunication utility, water utility, or sewer utility legislation or policy.
- The conflicts statement must identify any owner, executive, board member, employee, or subcontractor of proposer who has been employed by the PUCT or another state agency in Texas fewer than four years ago. If any individual is identified under this provision, the conflicts statement must disclose: 1) the former PUCT or state agency employee's name and current position with proposer; 2) the name of the state agency; 3) the nature of the previous employment with the state agency; and 4) the dates the employment ended with the state agency and began with proposer. The PUCT is restricted in its ability to enter into contracts with individuals and entities that employ these individuals under some circumstances. *See Texas Government Code Section 669.003.*
- The conflicts statement must certify either that the proposer does not employ an individual who has been employed by the PUCT or another agency of the State of Texas at any time during the two years preceding the submission of the proposal or that it has disclosed in its proposal the following: (i) the nature of the previous employment with the PUCT or the other agency; (ii) the date the employment was terminated; and (iii) the annual rate of compensation for the employment at the time of its termination. The PUCT is restricted in its ability to enter into contracts with individuals and entities that employ certain individuals under some circumstances. *See Texas Government Code Sections 2254.033 and 2252.901.*
- If the circumstances described by a proposer change or additional information is obtained subsequent to the submission of proposals, the proposer must supplement its conflicts statement as soon as reasonably possible upon learning of any change to their statement. If a supplement to the conflicts statement is required after the deadline for submission of proposals, the supplement is exempt from the requirement that all proposal documents must be submitted before the deadline in order for the proposal to be considered.
- The PUCT encourages proposers to provide complete disclosure of any matters that might be considered a conflict of interest or appearance of impropriety. The PUCT may

consider completeness of disclosure in evaluating whether a conflict of interest or an appearance of impropriety exists.

#### 6.A.7. Historically Underutilized Business (HUB) Certification and HUB Subcontracting Plan (HSP)

Any proposer that is HUB certified by the Statewide Procurement Division (SPD) of the Comptroller of Public Accounts (CPA) or one of its predecessors must submit a copy of its HUB certificate.

Additionally, the PUCT has determined that subcontracting opportunities may be available under this contract. Therefore, all proposers, including State of Texas certified HUBs, must complete and submit a State of Texas HSP with their proposal if the total dollar amount of the proposal response is \$100,000 or more.

Proposers can find HSP forms and instructions on the Texas CPA website at:

<https://comptroller.texas.gov/purchasing/vendor/hub/forms.php>

Responses that do not include a completed HSP will be rejected as required by Texas Government Code Section 2161.252(b).

#### 6.A.8. Certifications

Each proposal must contain a signed statement with the following certifications:

- The proposer has made a good faith effort to ensure all statements and information proposer submitted in response to this RFP are current, complete, and accurate. The proposer represents and warrants that all statements and information prepared and submitted in this document are current, complete, true, and accurate. Submitting a proposal with a false statement or making material misrepresentations during the performance of a contract is a material breach of contract and may void the submitted response and any resulting contract.
- The proposer has not given nor offered to give, and does not intend to give at any time hereafter, any economic opportunity, future employment, gift, loan, gratuity, special discount, trip, favor, or service to a public servant in connection with this proposal.
- The proposer is not currently delinquent in the payment of any franchise tax owed to the State of Texas.
- The proposer, the firm, corporation, partnership, institution, or other legal entity represented by the proposer, and anyone acting for such a firm, corporation, partnership, institution, or other legal entity, have not, in connection with this RFP:
  - Violated the antitrust laws of this state or federal antitrust laws;
  - Communicated directly or indirectly the bid made to any competitor or other person engaged in such line of business; or
  - Otherwise violated 15 U.S.C. Section 1, *et. seq.*, or Texas Business and Commerce Code Section 15.01, *et.seq.*

- Under Texas Government Code Section 2155.004, the proposer certifies that the individual or business entity named in this proposal is not ineligible to receive the specified contract and acknowledges that this contract may be terminated and payment withheld if this certification is inaccurate.

(A proposer is ineligible to receive a contract award if the proposer is “ a person who received compensation from the agency to participate in preparing the specifications or request for proposals on which the bid or contract is based.” *See* Texas Government Code Section 2155.004(a).

- The proposer is in compliance with Texas Government Code Section 669.003, relating to contracting with the current or former executive head of a state agency.
- Under Texas Government Code Section 2155.006, the proposer certifies that the individual or business entity named in this proposal is not ineligible to receive the specified contract and acknowledges that any contract may be terminated and payment withheld if this certification is inaccurate.

(A proposer is ineligible to receive a contract award if the proposer has violated certain laws or been subject to certain penalties in connection with hurricane relief, recovery, or reconstruction efforts. *See* Texas Government Code Section 2155.006.)

- Under Section 2155.0061, Government Code, the vendor certifies that the individual or business entity named in this bid or contract is not ineligible to receive the specified contract and acknowledges that this contract may be terminated and payment withheld if this certification is inaccurate. (A proposer is ineligible to receive a contract award if the proposer has been convicted of any offense related to the direct support or promotion of human trafficking within five years prior to the award of the contract.)
- Under Texas Family Code Section 231.006, the proposer certifies that the individual or business entity named in this proposal is not ineligible to receive payment under the proposed contract and acknowledges that any contract resulting from this proposal may be terminated and payment may be withheld if this certification is inaccurate.

(A child support obligor who is more than 30 days delinquent in paying child support, or a business entity in which the obligor is a sole proprietor, partner, shareholder, or owner with an ownership interest of at least 25 percent, is not eligible to receive payments from state funds under a contract to provide property, materials, or services. *See* Texas Family Code Section 231.006(a).)

- If a proposer includes a Texas address in its proposal, the proposer must certify whether or not it qualifies as a Texas Resident Bidder, as defined in Texas Government Code Section 2155.444(c).
- Proposer represents and warrants that it is not aware of any court or government agency actions, proceedings or investigations pending or threatened against proposer or any of the individuals or entities included in the response within the five calendar years immediately preceding the submission of the proposal that would impair respondent’s

performance under the contract, relate to the solicited or similar goods or services, or otherwise be relevant to the PUCT's consideration of the proposal. If proposer is unable to make the preceding representation and warranty, then proposer instead represents and warrants that it has included as a detailed attachment in its proposal a complete disclosure of any such court or governmental agency actions, proceedings or investigations. In addition, proposer represents and warrants that it will notify the PUCT in writing within five business days of any changes to the representations or warranties in this clause and understands that failure to timely update the PUCT may result in the proposer's disqualification at the PUCT's sole discretion, or if during the performance of the contract, will constitute a breach of contract and may result in immediate termination of the contract for cause at the PUCT's sole discretion.

#### 6.A.9. Evidence of Financial Capability

Proposer must provide evidence of financial capability. The preferred evidence of financial capability is an audited financial statement, if proposer has a current audited financial statement available or if it is practicable to obtain one for the proposal. If no audited financial statement is available, proposer must demonstrate its financial capability in whatever manner it deems appropriate. Evidence of financial capability will be considered in evaluating the competence of the proposer.

#### 6.A.10. Other Required Items

- Contact information, including, but not limited to, a phone number and an email address, that can be used to contact the proposer during the pendency of the solicitation. If a proposer is selected, the proposer will be expected to maintain current contact information with the PUCT during the term of the contract.
- Any proposer incorporated in Texas must include a copy of its current franchise tax Certificate of Good Standing, issued by the Texas State Comptroller's Office, and the corporation's charter number, issued by the Texas Secretary of State's Office.
- Each proposer must provide its 9-digit Federal Employer's Identification Number (EIN) or its 5-digit State of Texas Vendor's Identification Number (VIN).
- Each proposer must provide the name and social security number of each of the following, as applicable: an individual or sole proprietor; or each partner, shareholder, or owner with an ownership interest of at least 25 percent of the business entity submitting the proposal.

Proposers may decline to provide social security numbers at the time of submission, but will be required to provide the information before the contract is executed.

**FEDERAL PRIVACY ACT NOTICE:** This notice is given pursuant to the Federal Privacy Act. Disclosure of each applicable SSN is required under Texas Family Code Sections 231.006(c) and 231.302(c)(2). The SSN will be used to identify persons that may owe child support. The SSN will be kept confidential to the fullest extent allowed under Texas Family Code Section 231.302(e).

## **6.B. Format Requirements**

**6.B.1. Information Sheet** – The first page of the proposal submission must be an information sheet that clearly states: the name of the proposer, the name address, and telephone number of the proposer’s point of contact, the project number, and the RFP title and number. The information sheet will be the only portion of the proposal that is not filed under seal. Information sheets must be filed publicly in Project No. 51022.

**6.B.2 Copies and Price Information** – Proposers must submit one copy of their proposal clearly marked “Original” with an original signature and four additional hard copies of their proposal. Proposers must also submit one electronic copy of the complete proposal on a USB drive in Microsoft Word and PDF. The PDF version must include all required signatures and notarized statements.

Price information required by Section 6.A.4, Compensation, must be included only in the original proposal and the electronic copy. It must be excluded from the remaining four copies. This requirement is to allow the evaluation team to review proposals for the evaluation factors of Proposal Substance and Competence and Knowledge only. Each proposal will separately be given a score for pricing and that score will be applied to the scoring matrix to ensure that price does not inadvertently influence the evaluation of the other factors.

The four paper copies of the proposal must be identical to the original except for the omission or redaction of the price information.

### **6.B.3. Physical Format Requirements:**

- Proposals must be bound in a three-ring binder.
- Proposals must be printed on 8 ½” x 11” white paper using double or 1.5 spacing and 12-point or larger font. Font must be Times New Roman or its equivalent.
- Proposals must include index tabs separating the sections, as described in Section 6.A. Components, above.
- Pages must be consecutively numbered. Numbering must be continuous throughout the proposal.

**6.B.4.** Proposers are prohibited from using the Texas State Seal or the PUCT Seal in or on the proposal.

**6.B.5.** Proposals must not contain any extrinsic items, such as promotional items or other things not contemplated in this Request for Proposals.

**6.B.6. Page Limit** – Proposals must be limited to 75 pages, including all attachments and certifications, but excluding financial capability submittal, section tabs, or dividers. The PUCT may reject any proposals longer than 75 pages without review. In any case, evaluation team members will not be provided any pages past the 75<sup>th</sup> page. Either single-sided or double-sided printing is allowed, though double-sided printing is encouraged to conserve paper. A sheet of paper printed single-sided counts as one page; a sheet of paper printed double-sided counts as two pages.

## **SECTION 7 – CONDITIONS**

### **7.A. Irrevocable Offer**

Proposals may be withdrawn in writing before the deadline for receipt of proposals. After the deadline, a proposal becomes an irrevocable offer to provide the services described in Section 3, Statement of Work, with the terms and conditions specified in Attachment A. The offer is irrevocable for the shorter of a period of 90 days from the RFP closing date or until a contract resulting from this RFP is signed. The PUCT will not return withdrawn proposals.

### **7.B. Proposals are the Property of the PUCT**

All proposals and copies of proposals, as well as any best and final offer, and any records provided to the PUCT by the proposer associated with the evaluation of the proposal, will become the property of the PUCT after receipt and will be retained in accordance with the PUCT's records retention schedule.

### **7.C. Public Information Act Notice**

Following the award of a contract, all proposals are public information and subject to release. If the PUCT receives a request for any information submitted to the PUCT in connection with this RFP, the PUCT will follow the requirements of the Texas Public Information Act (Texas Government Code Chapter 552). This includes notifying proposers and the Office of the Attorney General if information that the PUCT knows proposer considers to be confidential is requested under the Texas Public Information Act. The PUCT assumes no obligation to assert legal arguments on behalf of a proposer. The PUCT may release portions of proposals and other information provided by a proposer without notifying the proposer if the information is not conspicuously marked "confidential" on each page.

A copy of the contract resulting from this RFP will be posted on the PUCT's public website. Information in PUCT contracts is public information unless it is made confidential by law. *See* Texas Government Code Section 552.022(a)(3).

### **7.D. Publicity**

Proposers are prohibited from making any public disclosures or news releases pertaining to this RFP, any resulting contract, or any results or findings based on information provided or obtained to fulfill the requirements of this RFP or resulting contract. This prohibition may only be waived by prior written approval of the PUCT for the specific disclosure or news release.

### **7.E. No Proposal Costs Reimbursed**

Neither the PUCT nor the State of Texas will reimburse any proposer for any costs related to: preparing a response to this RFP, preparing a best and final offer, providing additional information requested as part of the evaluation of proposals, or making any presentation requested as part of the evaluation of proposals.

### **7.F. Contract Terms and Conditions**

Any contract resulting from this RFP will use the standard general terms and conditions found in Attachment A to this RFP unless changes are negotiated in advance. Many of the terms and conditions are required by law and the PUCT will not negotiate when a term or condition is

required by law. Proposers must include any requested changes to the terms and conditions in their proposals.

#### **7.G. Vendor Performance Tracking System**

At the end of any contract resulting from this RFP, the PUCT will input required information into the Vendor Performance Tracking System regarding the contractor's performance and whether the contractor satisfied the best value standard for this contract. This information is public and other state agencies seeking goods or services are required, under most circumstances, to use the information in the Vendor Performance Tracking System to determine whether or not a particular vendor will meet the best value standard for the purchase of the goods or services.

## ATTACHMENT A –General Terms and Conditions for Proposed Contract

### **Article 1. DEFINITIONS**

When used in this contract, the following terms have the following meanings:

- 1.1 “**PUCT**,” means the Public Utility Commission of Texas, an agency of the state of Texas, acting through its Executive Director and the agency’s designated contract administrator.
- 1.2 “**Business day**” means a day the PUCT is open for business and is not observing a holiday.
- 1.3 “**Commission**” means the governing body of the PUCT.
- 1.4 “**Contractor**” or “**EM&V Contractor**” includes NAME, and any successors, heirs, and assigns.
- 1.5 Unless specifically described as a “business day” or otherwise defined in this contract, any reference to a “**day**” means a calendar day.
- 1.6 “**May**” means “is authorized to.”
- 1.7 “**Services**” means any and all services performed and any and all goods and products delivered by Contractor as specified in the Statement of Work.
- 1.8 “**Statement of Work**” means the description of goods and services to be provided under this contract found in Exhibit 1 to this contract.
- 1.9 “**Parties**” means PUCT and Contractor. “**Party**” means PUCT or Contractor.
- 1.10 Unless specifically defined otherwise in this contract, a “**week**” means seven consecutive calendar days.

### **Article 2. COMPENSATION**

**2.1 Compensation.** Contractor agrees to provide all Services (including labor, expenses, and any other services) described in the Statement of Work, as follows: [insert summary of payment terms]. Contractor understands that the PUCT are not responsible for payment of any costs or expenses exceeding this amount.

If Contractor believes that changes in the scope of Services to be performed will require Contractor to increase its fee, it must request the PUCT’s written authorization to increase its fee. Contractor must document the changes in the scope of Services and why they will require additional effort. The PUCT must approve the increase in fee by written amendment to this contract before Contractor performs any Services or may invoice the increased fee.

**2.2 Payment Process.** Contractor must submit an invoice to the PUCT contract administrator no later than the 15<sup>th</sup> business day after the month that the Services were performed. The invoice must contain the name of the person performing Services and a brief description of work performed. No payment will be made for administrative overhead, overtime, or other costs not specifically described in the contract.

On the statement or invoice, Contractor must include a statement that the invoice accurately describes the Services performed and the Services were performed in compliance with the

contract. The statement or invoice must include the vendor identification number issued by the Texas Comptroller or Contractor's federal taxpayer identification number, a description of the Services provided, and the name and division of the PUCT contract administrator.

Contractor must submit the invoice to the PUCT as follows:

By email to: Payables@puc.texas.gov

Or by mail to: Accounts Payable  
Public Utility Commission of Texas  
P.O. Box 13326  
Austin, TX 78711-3326

The PUCT contract administrator will review the invoice and any other relevant documentation to ensure the Services were performed in compliance with the contract. If the invoice does not contain required information or documentation, or if the PUCT disputes that the Services were performed in compliance with the contract, the PUCT will reject the invoice and give the contractor its reasons and the opportunity to submit a corrected invoice.

Upon approval of the invoice, the PUCT will instruct the utilities to pay the invoice.

**2.3 Release of Claims.** Contractor's acceptance of payment releases the PUCT of all claims for compensation owed in connection with this contract.

**2.4 Refund.** Contractor will promptly refund or credit within thirty calendar days any funds erroneously paid by PUCT which are not expressly authorized under the contract.

**2.5 Payments Made to Subcontractors.** Contractor must pay any subcontractor hereunder the appropriate share of payments received not later than the 10th day after the date Contractor receives the payment. The subcontractor's payment is overdue on the 11th day after the date Contractor receives the payment. The PUCT must approve Contractor's use of any subcontractor before Contractor engages the subcontractor (see Section 5.1 of this contract).

**2.6 Records.** Contractor and its subcontractors, if any, must maintain records and books of account relating to Services provided under this contract. Contractor must, for a period of seven (7) years following the expiration or termination of this contract, maintain its records (electronic and paper) of the work performed under this contract. Records include, but are not limited to correspondence concerning the subject of this contract between Contractor and the PUCT; Contractor's internal correspondence; and correspondence between Contractor and any third party. Contractor must make all records that support the performance of Services and payment available to any of the following PUCT, PUCT's designees, or the State Auditor during normal business hours with reasonable notice, upon the request of the PUCT contract administrator.

**2.7 Sole Compensation.** Payments under this Article are Contractor's sole compensation under this contract. Contractor must not incur expenses not contemplated under the Statement of Work, with the expectation that the PUCT, the state of Texas, or any utilities will pay the expense.

### **Article 3. CONTRACT ADMINISTRATION**

**3.1 PUCT Contract Administration.** The PUCT designates Jay Stone to serve as its primary point of contact and contract administrator throughout the term of this contract. Contractor acknowledges that the PUCT contract administrator does not have any authority to amend this contract on behalf of the PUCT, except as expressly provided herein. Contractor further acknowledges that such authority is exclusively held by the Commission exercising its authority through a vote in an open meeting, or the Executive Director of the PUCT as the Commission's authorized designee.

**3.2 Contractor Contract Administration.** Contractor designates its contract administrator as follows: [Insert Designee(s) Here]

**3.3 Reporting.** Contractor must report directly to the PUCT contract administrator and must perform all activities in accordance with the reasonable instructions, directions, and requests conveyed to Contractor by the PUCT contract administrator.

**3.4 Cooperation.** The Parties' respective contract administrators must handle all communications between them in a timely and cooperative manner. The Parties must timely notify each other by email or other written communication of any change in designee or contact information.

**3.5 Inquiries and Prompt Referral.** Contractor will promptly refer all inquiries regarding this contract received from state legislators, other public officials, the media, or anyone else not a Party to this contract to the PUCT contract administrator.

### **Article 4. REPORTS AND RECORDS**

**4.1 Written Reports.** Contractor must provide written reports to the PUCT in the form and with the frequency specified in the Statement of Work, or as otherwise agreed in writing between the Parties.

**4.2 Distribution of Consultant Reports.** Contractor agrees the PUCT has the right to distribute any consultant report associated with this contract, or to allow another Texas state agency or the Texas legislature to distribute it. The PUCT will also have the right to post any consultant report associated with this contract to the PUCT's website or to the website of a standing committee of the legislature. This provision does not waive any right to confidentiality that the PUCT may assert for the report or any portion thereof.

### **Article 5. SUBCONTRACTING PARTIES**

**5.1 Use of Subcontractors.** The Parties acknowledge and agree that, at the time of execution of this contract, Contractor intends to perform the Services required under this Contract using its own employees [or intends to perform the Services required under this Contract using the following subcontractors:]. Contractor will notify the PUCT contract administrator of any other proposed subcontract and will work with the PUCT HUB Coordinator to procure such other subcontractor and to submit appropriate subcontractor selection documentation for approval prior to engaging any other subcontractor, such approval not to be unreasonably withheld. Any

subcontract not contemplated at the initiation of this contract and any subsequent substitution of a subcontractor must be approved by an amendment according to the terms of Article 7.

**5.2 Sole Responsibility.** Contractor is solely responsible for the quality and timeliness of the work produced by all subcontractors that Contractor may engage to provide Services hereunder and for the timely payment for all work produced by all subcontractors that the PUCT accepts in accordance with the terms of this contract.

**5.3 Prime Vendor Contract.** The Parties expressly agree that this Contract is intended to constitute a prime vendor contract, with Contractor serving as the prime vendor for delivery of the Services made the subject hereof. Contractor acknowledges and agrees that it is fully liable and responsible for timely, complete delivery of the Services described in this Contract, notwithstanding the engagement of any subcontractor to perform an obligation under this Contract.

## **Article 6. TERM AND TERMINATION**

**6.1 Term.** The term of this Contract will begin on December 1, 2020, and will continue in effect until November 30, 2024 unless sooner terminated under Sections 6.2 or 6.3 of this Contract.

**6.2 Termination for Cause by the PUCT.** If Contractor fails to provide the goods or services contracted for according to the provisions of the contract, or fails to comply with any terms or conditions of the Contract, the PUCT may serve upon Contractor written notice requiring Contractor to cure such default. Unless within thirty (30) days after receipt of said notice by Contractor, said default is corrected or arrangements satisfactory to the PUCT, as applicable, for correcting the default have been made by Contractor, the PUCT may terminate this contract for default and will have all rights and remedies provided by law and under this contract. If the PUCT terminates Contractor for a violation of Section 18.12, of this contract, the PUCT need not provide any notice or opportunity for curing the default. The PUCT will not be liable for any damages or loss to Contractor as a result of termination for convenience.

**6.3 Termination for the Convenience of the PUCT.** The PUCT may, upon thirty (30) days written notice to Contractor, terminate this contract whenever the interests of the PUCT so require. The PUCT will only reimburse those expenses already incurred at the time the notice is provided or expenses approved in writing, prior to Contractor incurring those expenses, for the purpose of wrapping up the contract. The PUCT will not be liable for any damages or loss to Contractor as a result of termination for convenience.

**6.4 Transfer of Duties.** In the event of termination, Contractor will provide reasonable cooperation to transfer its duties under the contract to another entity without disruption to the provision of Services.

**6.5 Remedies for Breach.** All remedies available to the PUCT for breach or anticipatory breach of this contract by Contractor are cumulative and may be exercised concurrently or separately, and the exercise of any one remedy will not be deemed an election of such remedy to the exclusion of other remedies. Actual damages, cost projections, and injunctive relief may also be invoked either separately or combined with any other remedy in accordance with applicable law.

**6.6 Survival.** In the event that this Contract expires or is terminated pursuant to its terms, the rights and obligations of the Parties under it will end; provided that the provisions of Sections 2.3 through 2.6, 3.5, 4.2, 6.5, 6.6, 7.5, 9.2, 9.4 through 9.6, 17.2 and 19.1 through 19.5, 19.9 and Articles 1, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 20, 21, 23, 28, and 29 will survive in their entirety.

## **Article 7. ASSIGNMENT, AMENDMENTS, AND MODIFICATIONS**

**7.1 Material Change Requests.** The PUCT may propose changes to the Statement of Work. Upon receipt of a written request from the PUCT for a change to the Statement of Work, Contractor must, within the deadline specified in the request, or if no deadline is specified within a reasonable time after the request, submit to the PUCT a detailed written estimate of any proposed price and schedule adjustments to this contract. No changes to the Statement of Work, will occur without the Parties' written consent as provided in accordance with the terms stated in this contract.

**7.2 Changes in Law, Rules, or Rulings.** Changes in federal or state legislation, rules and regulations or rulings by the PUCT after the effective date of this contract may require modification of the terms of this contract, including an increase or decrease in Contractor's duties or compensation. In the event of changes to statutes, rules, or regulations affecting the terms of this contract, the PUCT and Contractor must negotiate the terms of a contract modification in good faith and incorporate the modification into this Contract by written amendment.

**7.3 No Assignment of Duties.** This contract will be binding upon and inure to the benefit of the permitted successors and assigns of any Party (including by merger of Contractor or otherwise by operation of law); provided, however, that Contractor may not otherwise, without the prior written consent of the PUCT, assign or transfer this contract or any obligation incurred under this contract. Any attempt by Contractor to assign or transfer this contract or any obligation incurred under this contract, in contravention of this article, will be voidable at the PUCT's sole discretion.

**7.4 Amendments and Modifications.** This contract may not be amended or modified in any manner except by written instrument executed by authorized representatives of the Parties in accordance with the terms of this contract.

**7.5 Binding on Successors.** The terms of this contract will be binding on any successor organization of any of the Parties.

## **Article 8. REPRESENTATIONS, WARRANTIES AND COVENANTS**

**8.1 Warranty of Performance.** Contractor represents, warrants, and covenants that it will perform the Services outlined in the Statement of Work, in a professional and workmanlike manner, consistent with professional standards of practice in the professional industry.

**8.2 Warranty of Services.** Contractor warrants that the Services will be rendered by the qualified personnel named in Section 19.8 of this contract. If Services provided under this contract require a professional license, then Contractor represents, warrants, and covenants that the activity will be performed only by duly licensed personnel.

## **Article 9. RISK OF LOSS AND PROPERTY RIGHTS**

**9.1 Risk of Loss.** The risk of loss for all items to be furnished hereunder will remain with Contractor until the items are delivered to and accepted by the PUCT, at which time the risk of loss will pass to the PUCT.

**9.2 Ownership.** Except for materials where any intellectual property rights are vested in a third party, such as software or hardware, in which case such rights remain the property of the third party, all finished materials, deliverables, conceptions, or products created or prepared for or on behalf of the PUCT and purchased by the PUCT, or on behalf of the PUCT, that the PUCT has accepted as part of the performance of Services hereunder, will be the PUCT's property exclusively and will be given to the PUCT either at the PUCT's request during the term of the Contract or upon termination or expiration of the contract. Notwithstanding the foregoing, materials created, prepared for, or purchased exclusively by the PUCT or on behalf of the PUCT are the PUCT's exclusive property regardless of whether delivery to the PUCT is effectuated during or upon termination or expiration of this contract.

**9.3 Licensed Software.** With PUCT's advanced written consent, Contractor may obtain software licenses as an agent of the PUCT for software that is used by Contractor solely for the purpose of providing Services under this contract. Contractor must provide the PUCT with a copy of any software license obtained by Contractor as an agent for the PUCT for the purpose of providing Services under this contract.

**9.4 Prior Works.** Except as provided herein, all previously owned materials, conceptions, or products remain the property of Contractor and nothing contained in this contract will be construed to require Contractor to transfer ownership of such materials to the PUCT.

**9.5 Trademarks.** The Parties agree that no rights to any trademark or service mark belonging to another Party or to any non-Party are granted to any other Party by this contract, unless by separate written instrument. The PUCT acknowledges and agree that use of any trademark associated with any software provided by Contractor under this contract does not give the PUCT any rights of ownership in the trademark or the software.

**9.6 Program Information.** Program information, data, and details relating to Contractor's Services under this contract must be maintained separately from Contractor's other activities. Contractor must undertake all reasonable care and precaution in the handling and storing of this information.

**9.7 Provision to be Inserted in Subcontracts.** Contractor must insert a provision containing Sections 9.2 and 9.6 of this contract in all subcontracts hereunder except altered as necessary for proper identification of the contracting Parties and the PUCT under this contract.

## **Article 10. PUBLIC INFORMATION**

**10.1 Texas Public Information Act. (Texas Government Code Chapter 552).** The Parties acknowledge that notwithstanding any other provisions of this contract, the Texas Public Information Act ("PIA") governs the treatment of all information held by or under the control of

the PUCT. The PUCT will notify Contractor of requests for Contractor's information as required under the PIA.

**10.2 Agreement Not Confidential.** The Parties acknowledge that not all terms of this contract may be confidential under the PIA, regardless of whether those terms are marked "Proprietary," "Trade Secret," or "Confidential." Contractor further acknowledges that in the event of a dispute over the release of a proposal or part of a proposal the PUCT is bound by the decision made by the Office of the Attorney General of Texas.

**10.3 Contractor's Duty to Provide Public Information.** Contractor is required, at no additional cost to the state, to make available in a format that is accessible by the public any information created or exchanged with the state, pursuant to this contract. For the purpose of Section 10.3 of this contract, paper documents, Adobe Portable Document Format files (.pdf), Microsoft Excel spreadsheets (.xls), Microsoft Word documents (.docx), and Hypertext Markup Language (.html) files will be considered "accessible by the public," unless another format is specified by the PUCT, at the PUCT's sole discretion. If information created or exchanged with the state pursuant to this contract is excepted from disclosure under the PIA, Contractor will not be required to make the information available to the public, but may be required to facilitate the PUCT's provision of the information to the Texas Attorney General for a decision on the information's confidentiality. The PUCT has no duty or responsibility to argue a defense of confidentiality to Contractor's information or data; it will be Contractor's sole responsibility to do so.

## **Article 11. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND EMPLOYMENT RESTRICTION**

**11.1 No Conflicting Relationships.** Contractor certifies to the PUCT that no existing or contemplated relationship exists between Contractor and the PUCT that interferes with fair competition or is a conflict of interest, and that no existing or contemplated relationship exists between Contractor and another person or organization, whether or not located within the State of Texas, that constitutes or will constitute a conflict of interest for Contractor with respect to the PUCT.

**11.2 Prohibition on Transactions with Parties Adverse to the PUCT.** Contractor agrees that during the term of this contract and any extensions or renewals thereof, it will neither provide contractual services nor enter into any agreement, oral or written, to provide services to a person or organization that is regulated or funded by the PUCT or that has interests that are directly or indirectly adverse to those of the PUCT. The PUCT may waive this provision in writing if, in the PUCT's sole judgment, such activities of the Contractor will not be adverse to the interests of the PUCT.

**11.3 Notice of Conflict.** Contractor agrees to promptly notify the PUCT of any circumstance that may create a real or perceived conflict of interest, whether arising prior to or during the term of the contract. Contractor agrees to use its best efforts to resolve any real or perceived conflict of interest to the satisfaction of the PUCT. If Contractor fails to do so, it will be grounds for termination of this contract for cause, pursuant to Section 6.2 of this contract.

**11.4 Prohibited Employment.** Contractor agrees that it will not hire any person whose employment with Contractor would violate any of the employment restrictions in Texas Government Code Chapter 572 or Texas Utilities Code Chapter 12.

### **Article 12. INDEMNIFICATION**

Contractor must indemnify, defend and hold harmless the PUCT, the State of Texas and their officers, agents, employees, representatives, contractors, assignees, and designees from any and all liabilities, claims, suits, assessments, penalties, losses, damages, demands or causes of action, and all related costs, attorney fees and expenses of whatever kind or nature asserted by a third party and occurring in any way incident to, arising out of, or in connection with acts or omissions of Contractor, its agents, employees and subcontractors, committed in the conduct of this contract. Contractor will have the obligation to undertake the defense of any such claim, process, or legal proceeding at Contractor's expense; provided, however, that the PUCT may participate in the defense with counsel of their own choosing. Any defense must be coordinated by Contractor with the Office of the Attorney General when Texas State Agencies are named defendants in any lawsuit. Contractor may not agree to any settlement without first obtaining concurrence from the Office of the Attorney General when Texas State Agencies are named defendants in any lawsuit. Contractor, the PUCT agree to furnish timely written notice to each other of any claim.

If all or any part of the deliverables of this contract is the subject of any claim, suit, or proceeding for infringement or misappropriation of any intellectual property right, Contractor may, and in the event of any adjudication that the deliverables or any part thereof infringes or misappropriates any patent, trademark, copyright, or trade secret, or if the licensing or use of any of the deliverables or any part thereof is enjoined, Contractor must, at its expense do one of the following things: (i) procure for the PUCT the right under such patent, trademark, copyright or trade secret to fully use the deliverables or the affected part thereof; or (ii) replace the deliverable or affected part thereof with another non-infringing deliverable; or (iii) suitably modify the deliverable or affected part thereof to make it non-infringing.

### **Article 13. INSURANCE**

**13.1 Contractor Responsibility.** Contractor agrees to comply with all state and federal laws applicable to the liability and payment of Contractor and Contractor's employees, including laws regarding wages, taxes, insurances, and workers' compensation. Neither the PUCT nor the State of Texas will be liable to the Contractor, its employees, agents, or others for the provision of unemployment insurance or workers' compensation or any benefit available to a state employee.

**13.2 Minimum Insurance.** Contractor must, at its sole cost and expense, secure and maintain as a minimum, from the effective date of this contract and thereafter during the term of this contract and any renewals or extensions thereof, for its own protection and the protection of the PUCT and the State of Texas:

- a) commercial liability insurance, covering, at a minimum, the following categories of liability within the following limits: (i) bodily injury and property damage - \$1,000,000 limit per occurrence, \$2,000,000 aggregate, (ii) medical expense - \$5,000 limit per

person, (iii) personal injury and advertising liability - \$1,000,000 limit, (iv) products or completed operations – \$2,000,000 aggregate, (v) damage to premises rented - \$50,000 limit;

- b) automobile liability coverage for vehicles driven by Contractor’s employees (\$500,000 per occurrence);
- c) workers’ compensation insurance in accordance with the statutory limits, as follows: (i) employer’s liability - \$1,000,000 each incident, (ii) disease - \$1,000,000 each employee and \$1,000,000 policy limit;
- d) cyber incident coverage to include: privacy breach related legal expenses to review and determine responsibilities under privacy breach laws; expenses related to compliance with privacy law notification requirements; credit and identification monitoring for up to 12 months after a cyber incident; expenses related to forensic investigations to investigate a system intrusion into the Contractor’s computer system; and expenses to hire a public relations firm for public communications response; and
- e) a fidelity bond or crime policy in the amount of \$1,000,000 with third party coverage for the PUCT for Contractor’s employees working with proprietary information, or Confidential Information.

The PUCT and the State of Texas must be named an additional insured on the commercial liability and automobile policies.

Insurance coverage must be from companies licensed by the State of Texas to provide insurance with an “A” rating from A.M. Best and authorized to provide the corresponding coverage.

**13.3 Certificates of Insurance.** Contractor must furnish to the PUCT certificates of insurance and any applicable endorsements, signed by authorized representatives of the surety or insurers, of all such bonds and insurance and confirming the amounts of such coverage within ten (10) days of the effective date of this contract, and upon request thereafter. Contractor must provide the PUCT contract administrator with timely renewal certificates as the coverage renews. Failure to maintain such insurance coverage specified herein, or to provide such certificates or endorsements promptly, will constitute a material breach of this Contract. Contractor must provide thirty (30) days written notice of any notice for renewal or cancellation of insurance.

**Article 14. DISPUTE RESOLUTION**

The Parties agree to resolve disputes arising under this contract through the dispute resolution process provided for in Chapter 2260 of the Texas Government Code and Subchapter C of the PUCT Rules for Administrative Services.

**Article 15. SOVEREIGN IMMUNITY**

The State of Texas and the PUCT do not waive sovereign immunity by entering into this contract and specifically retain immunity and all defenses available to them under the Constitution, the laws of the State of Texas, or the common law.

## **Article 16. GOVERNING LAW**

Notwithstanding anything to the contrary in this contract, this contract will be deemed entered into in the State of Texas and will be governed by, construed and interpreted in accordance with the laws of the State of Texas that apply to contracts executed in and performed entirely within the State of Texas, without reference to any rules of conflict of laws. The Parties consent to the exclusive jurisdiction of the State of Texas. The Parties hereby submit to the jurisdiction of the courts located in, and venue is hereby stipulated to, the state courts located in Travis County, Texas. Each Party stipulates that it is subject to the jurisdiction of the courts located in Travis County, Texas, for any cause of action arising from any act or omission in the performance of this contract. Further, each Party hereby waives any right to assert any defense to jurisdiction being held by the courts located in Travis County, Texas, for any cause of action arising from any act or omission in the performance of this contract.

## **Article 17. COMPLIANCE WITH LAW**

**17.1 General.** Contractor must comply with all federal, state, and local laws, executive orders, regulations, and rules applicable at the time of performance. Contractor warrants that all Services sold hereunder will have been produced, sold, delivered, and furnished in strict compliance with all applicable laws and regulations to which they are subject, including, but not limited to, Equal Employment Opportunity laws. All laws and regulations required in agreements of this character are hereby incorporated by this reference.

**17.2 Taxes.** Contractor agrees to comply with any and all applicable state tax laws that may require any filing with or payment to the State of Texas as a result of any action taken as a result of this contract.

**17.3 Workers' Compensation.** Contractor agrees that it will be in compliance with applicable state workers' compensation laws throughout the term of this contract and any renewals or extensions thereof.

**17.4 Conflicts.** Contractor agrees to abide by the requirements of and policy directions provided by the Texas statutes, the rules and regulations of the PUCT. Contractor agrees to inform and consult with the PUCT when further interpretations or directions are needed in order to fully implement the rules and regulations of the PUCT. In the event that Contractor becomes aware of inconsistencies between this Contract and a Texas statute or PUCT rule, Contractor will so advise the PUCT immediately and will cooperate fully to revise applicable provisions of this contract as necessary.

**17.5 Compliance with Deceptive Trade Practices Act.** Contractor must comply with Texas Business and Commerce Code Chapter 17.

**17.6 Compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act.** Contractor must comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, 42 U.S.C. Chapter 126.

**17.7 Prohibited Use of Appropriated or Other Funds.** Contractor must comply with Texas Government Code Sections 556.005 and 556.0055 related to prohibited uses of appropriated and other funds.

**17.8 Certificate of Interested Parties Form.** At the time Contractor submits a signed contract to the PUCT, Contractor must submit a “Certificate of Interested Parties” form to the PUCT and file the form with the Texas Ethics Commission. The form and instructions for filing the form can be found at: <https://www.ethics.state.tx.us/tec/1295-Info.htm>. Contractor must not perform any work under the contract, nor receive any compensation prior to filing the form with the Texas Ethics Commission.

## **Article 18. CONTRACTOR’S CERTIFICATION**

By accepting the terms of this Contract, Contractor certifies that, to the extent applicable, it is in compliance with the following requirements and prohibitions. Contractor understands and agrees that a false certification may lead to termination of this contract for cause.

**18.1 Prohibitions on Gifts.** Contractor has not given, offered to give, nor intends to give at any time hereafter any economic opportunity, future employment, gift, loan, gratuity, special discount, trip, favor, or service to a public servant in connection with this contract.

**18.2 Delinquent Obligations.** Contractor is not currently delinquent in the payment of any franchise or sales tax owed to the State of Texas, and is not delinquent in the payment of any child support obligations under applicable state law.

**18.3 Terrorist Financing.** The PUCT is federally mandated to adhere to the directions provided in the President’s Executive Order (EO) 13224, Executive Order on Terrorist Financing – Blocking Property and Prohibiting Transactions With Persons Who Commit, Threaten to Commit, or Support Terrorism, effective 9/24/2001 and any subsequent changes made to it, via cross referencing proposers or vendors with the Federal General Services Administration’s System for Award Management (SAM), <https://www.sam.gov/>, which is inclusive of the United States Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) Specially Designated National (SDN) list.

<http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/SDN-List/Pages/default.aspx>

Contractor certifies that the Contractor and its principals are eligible to participate in this transaction and have not been subjected to suspension, debarment, or similar ineligibility determined by any federal, state or local governmental entity and that Contractor is not listed on the federal government’s terrorism watch list as described in Executive Order 13224. Entities ineligible for federal procurement are listed at: <https://www.sam.gov/>

Contractor further certifies that it is not engaged in business with Iran, Sudan, or a foreign terrorist organization as prohibited by Section 2252.152 of the Texas Government Code.

**18.4 Antitrust.** Neither Contractor nor anyone acting for Contractor has violated the antitrust laws of this state, codified in Section 15.01, et seq. of the Texas Business and Commerce Code or the Federal Antitrust Laws, nor has communicated directly or indirectly to any competitor or any other person engaged in such line of business for the purpose of obtaining an unfair price advantage.

**18.5 Family Code.** Contractor has no principal who is ineligible to receive funds under Texas Family Code Section 231.006 and acknowledges that this contract may be terminated, and payment may be withheld if this certification is inaccurate.

**18.6 Prohibited Compensation.** Contractor has not received compensation from the PUCT, or any agent, employee, or person acting on the PUCT's behalf for participation in the preparation of this contract.

**18.7 Government Code.** Under Texas Government Code Section 2155.004, Contractor certifies that the individual or business entity named in this contract is not ineligible to receive the specified contract and acknowledges that this contract may be terminated, or payment may be withheld if this certification is inaccurate.

**18.8 Outstanding Obligations.** Payments due under the contract will be applied towards any debt that is owed to the State of Texas, including but not limited to delinquent taxes and child support.

**18.9 Contracting with Executive Head of State Agency.** Contractor certifies this contract is in compliance with Texas Government Code Section 669.003 relating to contracting with the executive head of a State agency. If Texas Government Code Section 669.003 applies, bidder will provide the following information in order for the bid to be evaluated: Name of Former Executive; Name of State Agency; Date of Separation from State Agency; Position with Bidder; and Date of Employment with Bidder.

**18.10 Buy Texas.** Contractor will comply with Texas Government Code Section 2155.4441, pertaining to service contracts regarding the use of products produced in the state of Texas.

**18.11 Hurricane Recovery.** Under Texas Government Code Section 2155.006, Contractor certifies that the individual or business entity named in this proposal is not ineligible to receive the specified contract and acknowledges that this contract may be terminated, and payment withheld if this certification is inaccurate.

**18.12 E-Verify.** Contractor certifies and ensures that it utilizes and will continue to utilize, for the term of this Contract, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's E-Verify system to determine the eligibility of:

1. All persons hired to perform duties within Texas, during the term of the contract; and
2. All persons (including subcontractors) hired by the proposer to perform work pursuant to the contract, within the United States of America.

The Contractor must provide, upon request of PUCT, an electronic or hardcopy screenshot of the confirmation or tentative non-confirmation screen containing the E-Verify case verification number for attachment to the Form I-9 for the three most recent hires that match the criteria above, by the Contractor, and Contractor's subcontractors, as proof that this provision is being followed.

If this certification is falsely made, the contract may be immediately terminated, at the discretion of the state and at no fault to the state, with no prior notification. The Contractor will also be

responsible for the costs of any re-solicitation that the state must undertake to replace the terminated contract.

This term should not be construed to require Contractor to utilize E-Verify to determine the eligibility of existing employees, or otherwise use E-Verify in violation of the law.

**18.13 Debarred Vendors List.** Contractor certifies that it is not on the Debarred Vendors List located at [http://www.window.state.tx.us/procurement/prog/vendor\\_performance/debarred/](http://www.window.state.tx.us/procurement/prog/vendor_performance/debarred/).

**18.14 Does Not Boycott Israel.** If Contractor is required to make a certification pursuant to Texas Government Code Section 2270.002. Contractor certifies that Contractor does not boycott Israel and will not boycott Israel during the term of the contract resulting from this solicitation. If Contractor does not make that certification, Contractor certifies that it provided a statement to the PUCT, prior to signing this contract, stating why the certification is not required.

## **Article 19. GENERAL PROVISIONS**

**19.1 Relationship of Parties.** Contractor is and will remain at all times an independent contractor, and nothing in this contract will be deemed to create a joint venture, partnership, employment, franchise, or master-servant relationship between the Parties. Notwithstanding anything to the contrary, the Parties will have principal-agent relationships as described in the Statement of Work. Except as expressly provided to the contrary elsewhere in this contract, no Party has any right or authority to act on behalf of another Party, nor to assume or create any obligation, liability or responsibility on behalf of another Party. Under no circumstances will the relationship of employer and employee be deemed to arise between the PUCT and Contractor's personnel. Contractor will be solely responsible for achieving the results contemplated by this contract, whether performed by Contractor, its agents, employees or subcontractors.

**19.2 Non-Exclusivity.** Nothing in this contract is intended nor will be construed as creating any exclusive arrangement between Contractor and PUCT. This contract will not restrict from acquiring any similar, equal, or like goods or services from other entities or sources.

**19.3 Taxes and Statutory Withholdings.** Contractor acknowledges that it is not a PUCT or employee, but is an independent contractor. Accordingly, it is Contractor's sole obligation to report as income all compensation received by Contractor under the terms of this contract. Contractor is solely responsible for all taxes (federal, state, or local), withholdings, social security, unemployment, Medicare, Workers' Compensation insurance, and other similar statutory obligations (of any governmental entity of any country) arising from, relating to, or in connection with any payment made to Contractor under this contract. Contractor must defend, indemnify and hold the PUCT harmless to the extent of any obligation imposed by law on the PUCT to pay any tax (federal, state, or local), withholding, social security, unemployment, Medicare, Workers' Compensation insurance, or other similar statutory obligation (of any governmental entity of any country) arising from, relating to, or in connection with any payment made to Contractor under this contract. Further, Contractor understands that neither it nor any of its individual employees is eligible for any PUCT employee benefit, including but not limited to holiday, vacation, sick pay, withholding taxes (federal, state, local), social security, Medicare, unemployment or disability insurance, Workers' Compensation, health and welfare benefits,

profit sharing, 401(k) or any employee stock option or stock purchase plans. Contractor hereby waives any and all rights to any such PUCT employment benefit.

**19.4 Notice.** Except as otherwise stated in this contract, all notices provided for in this contract must be (a) in writing, (b) addressed to a Party at the address set forth below (or as expressly designated by such Party in a subsequent effective written notice referring specifically to this contract), (c) sent by a national carrier with tracking capability (e.g. FedEx or Certified U.S. Mail), with proper postage affixed and (d) deemed effective upon the third business day after deposit of the notice with the carrier.

IF TO THE PUCT:

ATTENTION: Executive Director  
1701 N. Congress Ave., 7th Floor  
Austin, TX 78701

With copies to the PUCT contract administrator, and Jay Stone, CTPM, CTCM, at the same address.

IF TO CONTRACTOR:

ATTENTION:  
ADDRESS  
CITY, STATE, ZIP CODE

**19.5 Headings.** Titles and headings of articles and sections within this contract are provided merely for convenience and must not be used or relied upon in construing this contract or the Parties' intentions with respect thereto.

**19.6 Export Laws.** Contractor represents, warrants, agrees and certifies that it (a) will comply with the United States Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (regarding, among other things, payments to government officials) and all export laws and rules and regulations of the United States Department of Commerce or other United States or foreign agency or authority and (b) will not knowingly permit any non-Party to directly or indirectly, import, export, re-export, or transship any intellectual property or any third Party materials accessed by Contractor during the course of this contract in violation of any such laws, rules or regulations.

**19.7 Preprinted Forms.** The use of preprinted forms, such as purchase orders or acknowledgments, in connection with this contract is for convenience only and all preprinted terms and conditions stated thereon are void and of no effect. The terms of this contract cannot be amended, modified, or altered by any conflicting terms, provisions, or conditions contained in a proposal or a preprinted form, such as purchase orders or acknowledgements. If any conflict exists between this Contract and any terms and conditions on a proposal, purchase order, acknowledgment, or other preprinted form, the terms and conditions of this Contract will govern.

**19.8 Specific Personnel.** Contractor has identified the personnel for this assignment ("Team"), as follows: [list]

Contractor warrants that it will use its best efforts to avoid any changes to the Team during the course of this Contract. Should personnel changes occur during the term of this Contract or any extensions or renewals thereof, Contractor will recommend to the PUCT personnel with comparable experience and required qualifications and training. The PUCT must approve any change in personnel on this project in writing. Contractor must provide individuals qualified to perform the tasks assigned to such individual. At the PUCT's request, Contractor must remove from the project any individual whom the PUCT finds unacceptable for any reason in the PUCT's sole discretion. Contractor must replace such individual with another individual satisfactory to the PUCT as soon as practicable.

**19.9 No Felony Criminal Convictions.** Contractor represents and warrants that neither Contractor, nor any of its employees, agents, or representatives, including any subcontractors and employees, agents or representatives of such subcontractors, has been convicted of a felony criminal offense or that if such a conviction has occurred Contractor has fully advised of the facts and circumstances surrounding the conviction.

**19.10 Publicity.** Contractor understands and agrees that the PUCT do not endorse any vendor, commodity, or service. Contractor understands and agrees that Contractor, its employees, representatives, other agents, or subcontractors may not issue any public disclosure, media release, advertisement, or publication without prior written approval of the PUCT: which pertains to this contract or any services or project to which this contract relates; or which pertains to any results or findings based on information provided, created, or obtained to fulfill the requirements of this contract; or which mentions the PUCT.

**19.11 No Third Party Beneficiaries.** Nothing contained in the contract, either express or implied, is intended to confer on any person other than the Parties, or their respective permitted successors, assigns, or transferees any interests, rights, remedies, obligations or liabilities.

**19.12 Prompt Payment.** All payments to Contractor, any payments by Contractor to any subcontractor, and any payments by a subcontractor to any other person or entity that provides goods or services under this contract must be made in compliance with Chapter 2251 of the Texas Government Code, commonly known as the Texas Prompt Payment Act

## **Article 20. NO IMPLIED WAIVER**

The failure of any party, at any time, to enforce a provision of this contract will not constitute a waiver of that provision; will not affect the validity of this contract or any part of it; and will not affect the right of any party to enforce each and every provision.

## **Article 21. ORDER OF PRECEDENCE**

In the event of conflicts or inconsistencies between the provisions of this contract and any attachments or exhibits, the following are given preference in the order listed below:

- 1) The terms and conditions of this contract;
- 2) The Statement of Work, including any exhibits;
- 3) The Request for Proposals;

- 4) The Contractor's proposal.

**Article 22. FORCE MAJEURE**

Neither the PUCT nor Contractor will be considered in default in the performance of its obligations under this contract to the extent that the performance of such obligations is prevented or delayed by any cause beyond the reasonable control of the affected party, which such party could not, by due diligence have avoided, including but not limited to acts of God, severe weather, explosions, riots, acts of war, or orders of legal authority. Such causes will not relieve either party of liability in the event of its failure to use due diligence to remedy the situation and remove the cause in an adequate manner, with all reasonable dispatch, and to give notice and full particulars of the same in writing to the other party as soon as possible after the occurrence of the cause that prevented or delayed performance of the obligations. If the event of Force Majeure continues for a period of more than one hundred and eighty (180) days, either party thereafter may terminate this contract upon giving at least ten (10) days prior written notice to the other party. The COVID-19 Pandemic will not be deemed a force majeure, as it is a currently known circumstance.

**Article 23. SEVERABILITY**

If any provision of this contract is held unlawful or otherwise unenforceable, that provision will be severed and deemed deleted and the remainder of this contract will continue in full force and effect, as if the provision had never existed.

**Article 24. FUNDING OUT CLAUSE**

This contract is contingent upon the continued availability of funding. If funds become unavailable through lack of appropriations, legislative or executive budget cuts, amendment of the Appropriations Act, state agency consolidations, or any other disruptions of current appropriations, provisions of Section 6.3 of this contract will apply. Any contract resulting from this solicitation is contingent upon the continued availability of lawful appropriations by the Texas Legislature. See Texas Constitution, Article III Section 49, State Debts; and Texas General Appropriations Act for the 2020-2021 Biennium, Article IX, Section 6.03, Excess Obligations Prohibited.

**Article 25. DRUG FREE WORKPLACE POLICY**

Contractor must comply with the applicable provisions of the Drug-Free Work Place Act of 1988, 41 U.S.C. § 8102, et seq., and 48 CFR § 52.223-6 Drug-Free Workplace) and maintain a drug-free work environment. The requirements of the Drug Free Workplace Act and the rules interpreting it are incorporated by reference and Contractor must comply with the relevant provisions thereof, including any amendments that may hereafter be issued.

**Article 26. SUBSTITUTIONS**

Substitutions are not permitted without written approval of the PUCT.

**Article 27. RIGHT TO AUDIT**

Pursuant to Section 2262.154 of the Texas Government Code, the State Auditor may conduct an audit or investigation of Contractor or any other entity or person receiving funds from the state directly under this Contract or indirectly through a subcontract under this contract. The acceptance of funds by Contractor or any other entity or person directly under this contract or indirectly through a subcontract under this contract acts as acceptance of the authority of the state auditor, under the direction of the legislative audit committee, to conduct an audit or investigation in connection with those funds. Under the direction of the legislative audit committee, Contractor or any other entity that is the subject of an audit or investigation by the state auditor must provide the state auditor with access to any information the state auditor considers relevant to the investigation or audit. Contractor will ensure that this clause concerning the authority to audit funds received indirectly by subcontractors through the vendor and the requirement to cooperate is included in any subcontract awards.

**Article 28. SIGNATORIES**

The undersigned signatories represent and warrant that they have full authority to enter into this contract on behalf of the respective parties.

**Article 29. ENTIRE AGREEMENT**

This contract, including the Statement of Work, constitutes the entire agreement and understanding between the parties with regard to its subject matter and supersedes and merges all prior discussions, writings, negotiations, understandings, and agreements concerning the provision of these Services. Any terms and conditions attached to a solicitation will not be considered unless incorporated into this contract by specific reference.

In WITNESS WHEREOF both parties by their duly authorized representatives have executed this contract effective as of [DATE].

**The Public Utility Commission of Texas**

By:

\_\_\_\_\_  
John Paul Urban  
Executive Director

Date Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

**Contractor**

By:

\_\_\_\_\_

Name

Title

Date Signed: \_\_\_\_\_