

State of Illinois
Courier Services for COVID-19 Specimens and Related COVID-19 Items
Request for Proposals

Answers to Prospective Respondents' Questions

General

#1 Question – For clarification, the top of the RFP document and the “Key Dates” section of the RFP document states Submissions due by 12:00 PM CST on September 17th, 2020. However, in the “Directions” section of the RFP document, proposals are to be submitted by 12:00 PM CST on September 16th, 2020. Which date should we operate against?

Answer – Proposals are due Thursday, September 17th not later than 12:00 pm CST to Vicki.Wilson@illinois.gov

#2 Question – There is a reference to “Item Deliveries” on the Excel file titled “COVID Specimens and Testing Supplies”. Are these items the laboratory testing supplies, or something else?

Answer – The reference to the “Items Deliveries” tabs on the EXCEL Pricing Tool represents the testing supplies, medications, equipment and other items the courier delivers to specified locations, while the “Specimens Deliveries” tab represents the courier delivering specimens collected from testing sites to the IDPH commercial labs.

#3 Question – What is the estimated start date of the awarded contract or what is time frame of notice for vendors to have drivers readily available? The RFP seems to read that we will be notified of the win and will start at the same time.

Answer – As soon as possible after the RFP closes, depending on the time it takes to reach agreement on contractual terms; no later than October 1, 2020.

#4 Question – What are the payment terms and method of payment?

Answer – Payment will follow the State’s prompt payment act.

#5 Question – Will non-minority owned or non-CMS BEP transportation companies be considered for award, or if our company name does not show up on Attachment D will it be considered?

Answer – Minority owned businesses as well as non-Minority owned businesses are welcome to submit proposals as the prime contractor. Both can also be used as subcontractors. However, only Minority contractors certified with the State of Illinois that participate will count toward the 4% BEP goal.

#6 Question – Are there specific insurance requirements required to support these courier services?

Answer – Vendor shall, at all times during the term of this contract and any renewals or extensions, maintain and provide a Certificate of Insurance naming the State as an additionally insured for all required bonds and

insurance. Certificates may not be modified or canceled until at least thirty (30) days' notice has been provided to the State. Vendor shall provide: (a) General Commercial Liability insurance in the amount of \$1,000,000 per occurrence (Combined Single Limit Bodily Injury and Property Damage) and \$2,000,000 Annual Aggregate; (b) Auto Liability, including Hired Auto and Non-owned Auto (Combined Single Limit Bodily Injury and Property Damage), in amount of \$1,000,000 per occurrence; and (c) Worker's Compensation Insurance in the amount required by law. Insurance shall not limit Vendor's obligation to indemnify, defend, or settle any claims.

#7 Question – We have a vast data base of independent contract drivers (some of which that we have used over the past 25 years). The RFP indicates we would need to submit a list of all independent contractors with the proposal. Would we be able to submit our plans on scope of work and our plans on how to properly and safely vet any individual independent contractor that we would use for these services?

Answer – All known independent contracts should be listed and the process used to obtain and vet future contractors in order to accommodate the needs of the contract.

#8 Question – There is some language that talks about the vendor having the necessary supplies. Other than the drivers having PPE and a dolly are there other supplies necessary?

Answer – This would also include means to transport specimens and collection materials, coolers to keep samples cold that are not already in an insulated cooler, cold packs for the cooler, availability to communicate with facilities, and device used to track pick ups and deliveries using bar codes. The vendor would be responsible for setting up the bar code system to inform submitters and track delivery of specimens and supplies.

BEP Goal

#1 Question – If a vendor does not outsource portions of their workload due to the quality requirements associated with laboratory specimen and replenishment supply transportation, does having a diverse workforce satisfy the requirement for the 4% BEP goal.

Answer – Having a diversified workforce does not satisfy the requirement for a respondent to meet the 4% BEP goal. Respondents must use State of Illinois BEP certified vendor(s) to satisfy the goal. The goal can be satisfied by subcontracting courier services to a BEP vendor, as well as using a BEP vendors to secure supplies used for this contract, using BEP vendors who sell fuel used for delivery vehicles, or engaging BEP vendors for other resources used in providing the services requested in this RFP. The respondent must identify the BEP vendor(s) and the dollar amount allocated to the BEP vendor on the Utilization Plan in addition to the completion of the other information required on the Utilization Plan.

Coverage Areas

#1 Question – Is this contract able to be segregated? Meaning could our company elect to provide delivery for "just," the pick up's out of Rockford, Illinois going to Elmhurst? Or is the contract awarded "as a whole," meaning that if we were awarded, that we would have to provide delivery to all of the pick up and drop off destinations for each address listed in the contract?

Answer – This contract is to cover all of Illinois, not just specific regions. Prospective vendors may not bid on specific regions.

#2 Question – If a WBE firm does not have service in Springfield or Carbondale but has services all in Northern Illinois, can the WBE bid only on that region?

Answer – This contract is to cover all of Illinois, not just specific regions. Prospective vendors may not bid on specific regions.

#3 Question – While we understand that potential vendors may elect to provide a proposal for one or both services required (i.e., supplies vs. specimens), will the IDHP consider a potential vendor that provides pricing for specific geographic regions (i.e., Northern Illinois vs. Southern Illinois) vs. the entire state?

Answer – This contract is to cover all of Illinois, not just specific regions. Prospective vendors may not bid on specific regions.

#4 Question – Are you looking for one vendor to cover all of Illinois or could the contract be awarded to multiple vendors?

Answer – The preference is to select one vendor to cover the entire state, but more than one vendor could be selected.

#5 Question – Are you allowed to bid on certain areas that are close to you or must you bid on all of the areas? For example, if a vendor is close to Chicago, North Chicago, Elmhurst but not to Carbondale or Springfield.

Answer – This contract is to cover all of Illinois, not just specific regions. Prospective vendors may not bid on specific regions.

Packages

#1 Question – When collecting packages listed in the 500 - 1000 pounds range, will these be loose or skidded?

Answer – These packages will be loose. The specimen collection materials are generally packaged into corrugated cardboard boxes where applicable. Exceptions may include items already in an exterior box, such as coolers.

#2 Question – Will the specimens be boxed or solely in biohazard bags?

Answer – There will be a combination of both. Many sites package everything in insulated coolers which are then picked up by the courier. Some have the courier pick up samples in biobags that are subsequently placed in the courier's cooler.

#3 Question – Are gel coolant packs required?

Answer – The courier would be responsible for providing means to keep specimens cold if they are not packaged in an insulated cooler, such as loose biohazard bags. The samples must remain cool in transit and upon arriving at the IDPH laboratories.

#4 Question – What size medical grade cooler is required for each driver?

Answer – It varies based on the schedule assigned, the number of drops and the volume at each site. The courier would be responsible for ensuring that all samples not in a corrugated cooler are kept cold. The cooler would at least need to be able to fit 200 samples, but again varies on the route and volume per facility.

#5 Question – How much notice is given to vendor with information on volume and weight of deliveries needed?

Answer – The IDPH laboratories generally receive little notice on larger than normal sample load from incoming submitters. Should an unusual situation arise, IDPH will inform the courier of a very large delivery where a different vehicle may be needed to transport for outgoing orders (collection materials sent to facilities). This notice may be as little as same day.

#6 Question – Are the samples that are picked up ambient in temperature or are they also refrigerated specimens? If refrigerated, does the driver need to have some sort of specimen bag?

Answer – These samples will be refrigerated. The courier would be responsible for providing means to keep specimens cold if they are not packaged in an insulated cooler, such as loose biohazard bags. The samples must remain cool in transit and upon arriving at the IDPH laboratories.

#7 Question – What type of specimen is to be transported? Specifically, is this a blood sample?

Answer – The current specimens being transported are generally upper and lower respiratory samples, such as sputum and nasal swabs. The IDPH laboratories have plans to extend some testing which will include blood and serum.

Pick-Up Locations

#1 Question – Will all the collections be made in person or will medical lock boxes be utilized? If so, are they equipped with digital locks or are keys required?

Answer – In-person collections are standard. The only locations with lockboxes are the Howard Brown sites, for which the facilities have given hard, physical key copies to their current driver. However, the current driver for these sites still conduct in-person pick-ups at the Howard Brown locations because the lockboxes are often empty or left unsecured.

#2 Question – How are specimen bag counts communicated? Is there a scanning component at pick-up and delivery?

Answer – Due to the emergency-procurement, the current courier did not establish an individual specimen tube count. The present courier currently counts specimen submission units in coolers/boxes. The exact sample count per box varies and is not currently being tracked. Couriers have the capacity to assign barcodes to each sample and get a total tube count, as opposed to a total box count.

Vehicles

#1 Question – Although most package dimensions are less than 24 inches squared, there are descriptions of weights up to 1000 pounds. Is it your preference to use temperature-controlled vans or can cars be used to pick up specimens?

Answer – Packages that weigh up to 1000 pounds are outgoing packages. Generally, these packages contain room temperature supplies. These supplies should not be exposed to high heat and humidity for a prolonged period of time. A van or truck would be preferable to transport items from the shipping warehouse to the varying size, weight and volume of packages.

#2 Question – What kind of vehicle are you needing for this type of trip? 53-foot Sleeper? 26-foot Box truck?

Answer – A box truck or large van is needed when transporting supplies from the shipping warehouse to various facilities.

#3 Question – What temperature and humidity controls might be needed? Due to the volume of specimens and supplies, are you looking for temperature/humidity-controlled vehicles or just within the master cooler?

Answer – If picking up specimens from a facility for delivery to IDPH labs, only a master cooler would be needed if they are not already packaged in an insulated cooler.

Schedules

#1 Question – Regarding supply deliveries, are these able to be delivered on the next scheduled stop? Can this include next day if necessary due to order availability cutoff time?

Answer – Yes, depending on the facility's needs, they may need delivered at the time of the next stop. Depending on receiving facility need, it may be acceptable to deliver supplies the next day.

#2 Question – In order to create density in the "scheduled routed" stops, are pick up times adjustable?

Answer – Yes, but the facility and IDPH laboratories must both agree.

#3 Question – Are there on demand stat pick-ups? If so what are the expectations?

Answer – Yes, but see below for approval process. We have approved some on-demand or stand-alone pickups in the past, though the expectation is that facilities will adhere to their scheduled pickups. On-demand and stand-alone service represent a greater, additional billing cost. On-demand pickups are usually a result of facility staff not being prepared in time, so they are encouraged to hold specimen until the next scheduled pickup or to drive specimens to the lab themselves. However, under extenuating circumstances, if IDPH approves the cost for an on-demand pickup, it is our expectation that the courier will have the capacity to dispatch a driver upon same-day request.

#4 Question – Understanding there could be additional specimen pick-ups each day, how are those communicated to the vendor?

Answer – On-demand pickup requests must be directed to IDPH for approval. Once approved, IDPH communicates with the courier manager to coordinate and execute the pick up. This prevents facilities from contacting the courier directly, so that the State can provide oversight and approve or deny additional charges.