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入场之价

Heather Grizzle · September 29, 2026

当由聋人主导的公司拒绝付不起费用的州政府机构时,聋人居民之间的差距就会扩大。交流,而非拒绝,才是更好的答案。

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当聋人主导的专业能力定价超出了最需要它的州所能承受的范围

一些为聋人、盲聋人和重听居民提供服务的州办公室,只有寥寥数名工作人员,预算中几乎没有余地聘请外部专业力量。当这些办公室寻求帮助时,对话往往止步于费用这一关:没有缩减范围的可能,没有反提案,也没有人问办公室能以什么来代替现金支付。这并非讲述某一家公司或某一个州的故事,本文也不点名道姓。它提出了一个聋人社区经常向由听人主导的机构提出、却较少向自身专业群体提出的问题。

这个问题丝毫不否认聋人主导的公司获得报酬的权利。聋人专业人士长期以来一直在争取被当作专家获得报酬,而不是被当作志愿者来咨询,一家无限期免费提供服务的公司根本撑不到能帮助任何人的那一天。真正的问题更为具体,也更为棘手。建立在聋人语言、聋人生活经验和聋人社区信任基础上的专业能力,对孕育它的社区负有某种回馈义务,包括那些无法支付市场价格的社区。当一个资源匮乏的州办公室被拒之门外、却没有得到任何替代方案时,这份义务就没有得到履行,而这种拒绝本身也说明了这种专业能力如今究竟是为谁服务的。

最付不起钱的办公室,恰恰是最需要帮助的

State infrastructure for Deaf, DeafBlind, and hard of hearing residents is uneven. Massachusetts established a standalone commission in statute, with its own commissioner and advisory board[1]. Minnesota runs its services as a division inside the Department of Human Services, whose commissioner receives the division's appropriations[2]. Idaho's council receives its appropriation through the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation[3], and in fiscal year 2023 reported a budget of about $510,400 and roughly five full-time-equivalent staff, about 25 cents per Idahoan, for an estimated 257,573 deaf and hard of hearing residents[4]. A state with a thin appropriation does not have fewer Deaf residents, fewer interpreter shortages, or fewer schools making placement decisions. It has fewer people available to work on those problems.

Many of the policy questions reaching these offices are shared across states. Courts already use video remote interpreting, and the National Association of the Deaf has warned that "many courts and legal service providers do not always understand or recognize that VRI may not provide the effective communication" deaf people need[5]. Public authorities have been deciding where to use signing avatars since at least 2018, when the World Federation of the Deaf and WASLI jointly raised concern about how those decisions were being managed[6], and Gallaudet's Department of Linguistics has since warned that AI developers are training on ASL video collected without community involvement[7]. A well-resourced state can hire or contract the expertise to write procurement language, test vendor claims, and push back before a contract is signed. An under-resourced state is more likely to take vendor materials at face value, because nobody on staff has the time or the specialist background to do otherwise. When outside Deaf-led expertise flows only to the states that can pay for it, the likely result is that the states with the most capacity get stronger, the states with the least absorb whatever is sold to them, and the gap between Deaf residents in different states widens where governance is weakest.

一句干脆的拒绝要付出什么代价

一家公司完全有权拒绝接受某项工作。精力是有限的,有些项目承担的责任风险不能无偿承受,一个对任何请求都来者不拒的机构,最终什么都做不好。问题不在于拒绝本身。

问题在于一种终结对话而非重塑对话的拒绝方式,因为这种选择所付出的代价,远远超出单一项目本身。

第一重代价落在该办公室所服务的居民身上,他们如今要么得不到任何帮助,要么只能将就接受某个供应商愿意无偿提供的东西。第二重代价落在公司自身。与小型州办公室的关系往往能够持久:他们的工作人员会晋升到更重要的职位,参与全国性委员会,撰写资助申请,并记得在他们一无所有时谁曾伸出援手。仅因价格而拒绝,等于用一段长久的关系去换取规避一次短暂的无偿付出。第三重代价落在整个行业身上。长期以来,支持聋人主导专业能力的理由,一直建立在这样一种主张之上:聋人的领导会改变结果,而不仅仅是增加代表性。一家表现得与其他任何供应商毫无二致、只服务于付得起钱的人而不顾其他人的聋人主导公司,削弱了每一位持有这种主张的聋人专业人士的立场。聋人主导是一种关于谁掌握权力的声明;但它本身并不能证明这种权力正在被以不同的方式运用。

交换不是施舍

常见的反对意见是:无偿工作会贬低工作的价值。这种反对意见混淆了两件截然不同的事。免费送出工作是施舍。用工作交换现金以外的其他东西,则是一种普通的经济实践,而资助公共事业的机构早已这样看待它。

Federal grant rules are the clearest example. Under the Uniform Guidance, recipients may meet cost-sharing requirements with third-party in-kind contributions. Their fair market value must be documented and, to the extent feasible, supported by the same methods the recipient uses internally, and services donated by another organization's employees are valued at the employee's regular rate of pay plus allowable fringe benefits and indirect costs[8]. A consulting firm's donated hours on a federally funded project can therefore count toward a state office's required match, at a documented dollar value, provided the contribution meets the rule's conditions. The firm is not giving its work away so much as converting it into something the office can use and a funder will count.

The professions have also long accepted that expertise carries a duty toward those who cannot pay. The American Bar Association's Model Rule 6.1 states that "every lawyer has a professional responsibility to provide legal services to those unable to pay," sets an aspirational figure of 50 hours a year, and directs that a substantial majority of those hours go to persons of limited means or to "charitable, religious, civic, community, governmental and educational organizations" serving them[9]. The

Deaf community's own professional codes already contain the same idea. The NAD-RID Code of Professional Conduct, which governs sign language interpreters, directs them to "charge fair and reasonable fees" and, in the same section, to "render pro bono services in a fair and reasonable manner"[10]. No comparable written standard appears to exist for Deaf-led consulting firms, which sit outside that code.

更好的答案是什么样的

以下任何一种替代方案,都不要求公司免费工作,而且大多数方案都能让公司比一口回绝处于更有利的位置。它们都始于同一个举动:询问办公室拥有什么,而不是止步于它缺少什么。

1. 在拒绝之前先缩小范围。许多请求都包含一个最小的可用部分:对某供应商说法的一页审查、一份用于招标文件的问题清单、与起草合同的工作人员共处一小时。公司可以提供这一部分,并据此定价或进行交换。

2. Trade for what the office controls. State offices hold things firms cannot buy: access to program data, standing to co-author, the ability to name a partner in a grant application or budget request, and formal letters of support. Those have real value to a firm building a track record, and the firm's own donated hours, properly documented, can count as the office's match on a federal award.

3. Tie the fee to future funding. A firm can be written into the office's next grant proposal or appropriation request as a named partner, with the fee paid if and when the funding arrives. The firm takes a risk; it also gets a seat in the application rather than a line on a vendor list.

4. 公布分级收费标准。预先设定、与机构预算规模挂钩的收费结构,把谈判环节从需求发生的那一刻移开,也传递出一个信号:小型办公室是被提前纳入考量的,而不仅仅是被勉强容忍的。

5. 联合多个小州。面对同一问题的若干资源匮乏的办公室,可以共享一次服务并分摊其费用。各州已经通过诸如NASPO ValuePoint这样的联合采购项目[11]采用这种联合采购的方式。

6. 预留固定比例的服务能力。借鉴无偿服务模式,公司可以每年承诺拿出固定的工时,用于服务无力支付的办公室,并提前决定这些工时如何分配,这样就不会出现某个请求的结果仅仅取决于谁先开口的情况。

一家公司如果确实无法做到以上任何一点,仍然可以做一件事:说明情况,解释原因,并为办公室指明可以求助的其他对象。附带推荐的拒绝,与终结对话的拒绝,是两种截然不同的行为。

这种专业能力究竟是为谁而存在

The modern Deaf rights movement took one of its defining stands on the principle that Deaf people should hold authority over Deaf institutions. In March 1988, the Deaf President Now protest at Gallaudet demanded a Deaf president and a Board of Trustees with a 51 percent Deaf majority, and the board agreed to all four of the protesters' demands within a week[12]. That principle does not lose its force when the people holding authority are Deaf. A Deaf-led firm that serves only the states able to pay full rate has, in practice, let the market decide which Deaf residents receive Deaf-led expertise, and the market tends to choose the ones who already have the most.

Much of grassroots Deaf community life has long depended on informal exchange: skills shared, favors traded, letters written for one another's applications. Professionalization can add payment to that tradition without replacing it. The standard worth holding is simple enough to state. When a state office with real need and no budget asks for help, the first answer should be a question about what it can offer, and the last answer, if the answer is no, should include somewhere else to go. That is not yet the norm. Until it is, any office turned away on price can bring that decline to Novara Consulting Group, where an empty budget is met the way grassroots Deaf communities have long met it, by sitting down together and working something out, and treated as the start of a beautiful future rather than the end of a conversation. Applications gladly accepted.

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TIPS

Know something about a sign language AI system that the public should know? Send it to tips@novaracg.com. Every tip is read by me and kept confidential. If you work in the UK, writing to us is not by itself a protected disclosure under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, so before you share employer information, check your options with Protect (protect-advice.org.uk), the free whistleblowing advice line.

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