



POSITION PROFILE

CANADIAN ADMINISTRATOR OF VIDEO RELAY SERVICES

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

POSITION DESCRIPTION

Client Organization: Canadian Administrator of Video Relay Services

Position Title: Executive Director

Location: Ottawa (or other location in Canada as determined)

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Background and Context

Over the years, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC)¹ has taken a number of decisions to promote the accessibility of telecommunications services to people with disabilities. In April, 2014, the CRTC announced that Video Relay Services (VRS) will be offered nationally to American Sign Language (ASL) and Langue de signes québécoise (LSQ) users to better facilitate conversations between people who are Deaf or hard of hearing and other Canadians, and vice versa. It is estimated that there will be approximately 20,000 primary users of VRS in Canada, and that VRS may be available as early as the fall of 2015.

VRS is currently available in at least nine other countries and is funded from a variety of sources and provided through many different models. In deciding how to implement VRS in Canada, the CRTC had to take into consideration the distinct characteristics of the Canadian marketplace, including two official languages, two corresponding sign languages, a relatively small population spread unevenly over a large land base, six time zones, and a unique Canadian telecommunications regulatory context.

The CRTC opted for a model in which VRS would be offered by an independent, centralized, third-party VRS administrator - the **Canadian Administrator of VRS**. VRS is to be available nationally, in both ASL and LSQ, and will be funded by telecommunications service providers through contributions to the existing National Contribution Fund², which will be capped at \$30 million annually.

For many Canadians who are Deaf or hard of hearing, ASL or LSQ is learned early in life and, in many cases, is their first language. VRS will make it possible for them to communicate with ease in their language of choice, thereby decreasing barriers to communication.

¹ The [CRTC](#) is the administrative tribunal that regulates and supervises Canada’s broadcasting and telecommunications in the public interest.

² The National Contribution Fund was created in 2001 to subsidize local telephone service in areas where the cost of providing this service is higher. Companies with over \$10 million in annual telecommunications revenues contribute to this fund.



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The Role and Opportunity

The inaugural Executive Director of the Canadian Administrator of VRS (CAV) will successfully develop, lead and manage the new corporation under the direction of the CAV Board of Directors and the CRTC, and will strategize and determine how VRS will be provided and implemented across Canada, within the parameters set by the CRTC. To review the detailed requirements for the VRS administrator as well as the requirements for VRS, please see [Appendix A](#).

This is an exciting and well-funded opportunity for the inaugural Executive Director of CAV. S/he will have the opportunity to design a regime from the ground up, incorporating lessons learned from others around the world, that does not currently exist and that will become an archetype for other nations. With an annual budget of \$30 million, this person will have an opportunity afforded few others in the world – to create and implement a VRS scheme that is comprehensive and yet does not suffer the same design flaws (from an incentive perspective) as found in other countries. The net result will be to bring to Canada a much needed and highly anticipated service that will improve the lives of Deaf and hard of hearing Canadians.

As the chief executive for CAV, the Executive Director will be responsible for the following broad objectives:

Governance: collaborate with and support the Board of Directors in its governance role, including

- Identifying, assessing and informing the Board of internal and external issues that affect the corporation;
- Acting as a professional advisor to the Board on all aspects of the corporation's activities;
- Fostering effective teamwork between the Board and Executive Director; and
- Developing and implementing policies and procedures as appropriate according to the corporation's mandate.

Program and Service Delivery: develop, implement and monitor the performance of VRS service (both the platform infrastructure as well as the VRS service providers), including

- Establishing and running a process to select a provider (or providers) of VRS and separately VRS platform;
- Developing privacy and confidentiality guidelines;
- Establishing a system to monitor VRS, including tracking and responding to complaints;
- Instituting a system to report data to the CRTC; and
- Ensuring all requirements are met by both CAV and with any party with which it contracts.

Communications and Public Relations: use both formal and informal strategies, media and channels to communicate with and keep all stakeholders informed of progress, including

- Engaging and building effective, collaborative relationships with stakeholders, such as the telecommunications service providers, the CRTC, the Board, contracted providers, and the Deaf and hard of hearing communities;
- Ensuring clarity of and alignment to objectives; and
- Developing an education and outreach campaign to make Canadians aware of how VRS works and when the service will be available.

Financial, Risk and Asset Management: apply responsible and sound financial and risk management practices, including

- Administering the funds of the corporation with prudent fiscal judgment, monitoring monthly financial statements, and reporting areas of interest and concern to the Audit Committee and Board;
- Ensuring adequate, timely and relevant financial information reporting to the Audit Committee;
- Assessing and implementing measures to control risks associated with the corporation's people, property, image and good will; and
- Ensuring that the corporation complies with all relevant legislation.



The Ideal Candidate

The ideal candidate has the following experience, skills, knowledge and attributes:

- Experience with designing, implementing, operating or regulating VRS, and an understanding of best practices and challenges of implementation and launch, along with corresponding tactical components such as RFPs and budgets.
- A Deaf or hard-of-hearing individual who has credibility with these communities.
- Fluency in ASL, LSQ or both.
- Exceptional relationship-building and stakeholder management skills; diplomatic, and effective at negotiating for results.
- Familiarity with good governance practices and ability to forge an effective working relationship with an inaugural Board of Directors.
- Mission-oriented person with proven ability to successfully launch a new service; balances innovation, creative thinking and foresight with strong planning and implementation skills.
- Experience outsourcing appropriate elements in order to be able to effectively fulfill on a national VRS mandate.
- Experience operating in a regulatory environment and comfortable with the reporting and filing requirements necessary.
- Energetic, empathetic and enthusiastic.
- High integrity; establishes trust and credibility with ease.

Contact Information

Should you have an interest in exploring this further or have any questions regarding this initiative, please contact:

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Appendix A: Detailed requirements

Requirements for the VRS administrator

- 1) Establish and monitor a national VRS system that meets the requirements set out below or otherwise set out by the Commission.
- 2) Operate in accordance with its bylaws, mandate, and any other corporate documents approved by the Commission.
- 3) Develop and file with the Commission, for information, the processes it will follow for:
 - a) resolving complaints between VRS users and itself or any VRS provider(s), with a mechanism to escalate complaints to the Commission;
 - b) recording and maintaining VRS usage and demand data (including monthly reports generated by the VRS technology platform) so that any trend analysis may be completed regarding call traffic patterns sorted by day and by hour, call volume, call duration, wait times, abandoned calls, technical areas, and other related issues; and
 - c) recording and maintaining data with respect to the provision of VRS, including, at a minimum: quality of service measures; financial accountability measures; and the number and nature of (i) complaints and inquiries (including those related to operator service and technical errors or technology compatibility), and (ii) operators (including the number of operators hired, the average wage rate and availability, and certification requirements).
- 4) Develop and file with the Commission, for information, privacy and confidentiality standards for the provision of VRS.
- 5) File any information requested by the Commission with respect to its operations.
- 6) Develop and file with the Commission, for information, a proposed education and public awareness campaign to encourage the adoption of VRS by users with and without disabilities, including institutions (e.g. financial institutions). The campaign must include (i) the proposed role of TSPs and proposed measures of success, and (ii) targeted education efforts to inform consumers about how to access 9-1-1 services using VRS as well as when VRS is not available. The proposal must be filed either at the same time the administrator seeks funding for service or earlier.
- 7) Introduce ASL and LSQ services on the same day and demonstrate that it has made all reasonable efforts to ensure that both services are equally comprehensive regardless of whether ASL and LSQ customers are served by the same or separate VRS providers. The administrator is not to limit one service to ensure its equality with the other service.
- 8) Ensure that staff and any advisory panels that may be struck to advise the Board of Directors include the perspectives of both the ASL and LSQ communities.
- 9) Ensure that the total of all VRS-related costs does not exceed \$30 million annually for a fully subscribed, full-time service.
- 10) File an application for annual funding with the Commission, demonstrating that all the requirements set out for VRS have been or will be met.
- 11) On a date set by the Commission before the VRS review, file with the Commission, for approval, modified or updated:
 - a) quality of service standards;
 - b) complaints resolution guidelines, including service standards; and
 - c) reporting requirements.



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- 12) Where all or some of the VRS is provided by a VRS provider, the administrator must include in any RFP, and in any resulting contract, a requirement that a VRS provider must:
- a) provide a service (or a portion of a service) that complies with (or allows the administrator to comply with) the requirements in this Appendix or otherwise established by the Commission;
 - b) provide to the administrator, or to the Commission directly, any information with respect to its operations for monitoring or review purposes, including any data collected or reports generated;
 - c) handle and monitor customer complaints in accordance with the mechanism established by the administrator;
 - d) record the following information in relation to the services provided:
 - i. operators (including the number of operators hired, the average wage rate and availability, and certification requirements);
 - ii. demand data (including, at a minimum, detailed call traffic patterns sorted by day and by hour, call volume, call duration, abandoned calls, and average wait time); and
 - iii. complaints and inquiries data relating to operator service and underlying technology.
 - e) indicate the price the VRS provider will charge to customers for long distance calls and any ancillary services. Bids should also indicate whether or not long distance calling cards are compatible with the service, and if so, identify which calling cards are compatible;
 - f) limit its contract term to a maximum of four years, with the option of an extension, in order to allow for possible changes resulting from the Commission's review of VRS; and
 - g) co-operate with the administrator and with any other VRS providers to ensure seamless transitions at the beginning and the end of the contract term.
- 13) In developing VRS, the administrator should consider the following:
- a) interoperability with other jurisdictions' VRS systems to the extent possible, to facilitate point-to-point calls internationally;
 - b) interoperability between VRS and MRS, as described in the ITU Total Conversation standard;
 - c) promotion of consumer choice in end-user devices that are current, off-the-shelf, and popular; and
 - d) separation of the technical and operator elements of VRS.

Minimum requirements for the VRS developed by the VRS administrator

- 14) Provide video relayed calls in both ASL and LSQ.
- 15) Use telephone numbers that conform to the NANP and provide universal access to and/or from the PSTN.
- 16) Use a single (common) VRS technology platform nationally that can support multiple VRS providers.
- 17) Use non-proprietary VRS technology based on current (i.e. evolving) industry-accepted technical protocols.
- 18) Use a specialized platform for VRS unless the key features of this decision become available on non-specialized platforms.
- 19) Provide some service every day of the week, targeting a minimum of 72 hours of operation per week, by the end of year one of VRS operation.
- 20) Target hours of operation that serve the highest traffic times, if operating VRS on a restricted schedule.
- 21) Be capable of expanding its hours of operation.
- 22) Include the ability for VRS users to make point-to-point calls (i.e. calls between VRS users without the use of an operator).



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23) Create a database of VRS users, accessible to the administrator, that includes users' address information and has a mechanism for users to update their information through customer service and online.

24) Provide access to 9-1-1 service during the hours of operation of VRS using the same approach that the Commission has mandated for nomadic VoIP 9-1-1 services, as set out in Telecom Decisions and 2007-44.

Specifically:

- a) the VRS operator must act as the intermediary between the VRS user and the 9-1-1 call operator at the PSAP;
- b) 9-1-1 service must be provided using the incumbent local exchange carriers' tariffed emergency call routing operator service so that the VRS operator has priority access to PSAPs across the country;
- c) customers must be informed when they register for VRS, and when they initiate a 9-1-1 call outside of VRS operating hours, of the hours when 9-1-1 service is unavailable via VRS and how to reach 9-1-1 during those hours;
- d) an onscreen notification must appear when a VRS user tries to place a 9-1-1 call during hours when VRS is not operational; and
- e) each VRS user's address information must be entered into a database and automatically provided to the VRS operator during a 9-1-1 call made via VRS.
 - i. The user-provided address information is to be used as a last resort, in situations where the VRS user is unable to provide or confirm their location.
 - ii. VRS users must have the capacity to update their address information for 9-1-1 purposes through customer service and online.

25) Use a screening process to ensure that operators are qualified sign language interpreters, meaning that they can interpret effectively, accurately, and impartially, both receptively and expressively, using any necessary specialized vocabulary.

26) Be provided to registered VRS users upon user self-certification of hearing or speech disability and their signing a user agreement. This agreement must be in plain language and must outline, at a minimum, user self-certification of a hearing or speech disability, privacy and confidentiality policies, fair usage policy, information on 9-1-1 access, and a billing agreement for ancillary and long distance services. This user agreement must be signed before services are rendered.

27) Have a user technology interface and written materials provided to the customer that are in plain language and are offered in the official language of the customer's choice.

28) Be provided at no additional cost to the customer.

29) Ensure that ancillary services such as call display, video mail, etc., where offered, are billed to customers who subscribe to these services at rates similar to those charged for corresponding voice services.

30) Offer VRS users long distance services at rates similar to those charged for other long distance services. Long distance calls initiated by VRS users are to be billable to the user, based on call duration.