

New Hampshire K-12 Schools Connectivity Consortium

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS For Internet Access Services

Release Date: October 19, 2009
Bidders Conference: October 29, 2009
Proposal Due Date: November 17, 2009
Anticipated Notification Date: November 30, 2009
Service Period Start Date: July 1, 2010

This Request for Proposals is issued by the New Hampshire K-12 Schools Connectivity Consortium (hereinafter referred to as the Consortium), formed by K-12 school districts for the purpose of maximizing group purchase pricing on E-Rate eligible services. The Consortium requests bids for a managed service provider to provide Internet services for all public and private K-12 schools in the state of New Hampshire. An E-Rate Form 470 has been filed on the Schools and Libraries Division website by the New Hampshire Department of Education (NHDOE) on behalf of this Consortium. The Consortium anticipates a three year contract for services from a managed service provider, with allowances for additional schools to join in years two and three.

This is the first year that schools in New Hampshire have formed a purchasing consortium of this nature. Representatives from several school districts have assisted in outlining as many details as possible regarding the scope of work and the evaluation criteria. Bidders are encouraged to include in their proposals any information that might assist the Consortium advisory committee to select the most appropriate and cost-effective provider for the Consortium. The Consortium, in accordance with E-Rate rules, will use the evaluation process outlined in this RFP to make a final determination.

The Consortium reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to reject any and all proposals, to waive any irregularity or informality in any response, and to accept or reject any item or combination of items. Additional details about the consortium are available at: <http://www.nheon.org/oet/erate/consortium.htm>

The State of New Hampshire, as well as the Consortium, shall have no financial responsibility for any costs or losses incurred by the bidder in responding to this Request for Proposal.

Proposals are due by Tuesday, 11/17/09. No faxed proposals will be accepted. No late applications will be considered. Submit one hard copy and one electronic copy via email no later than 5pm on 11/17/09 to:

Beverly Straneva (Connectivity Consortium Coordinator)
Southwestern NH Educational Support Center
c/o Keene State College
Mason Library, 229 Main Street, Keene, NH 03435
bstraneva@keene.edu or 603.358.2750

A Bidders Conference will be held on Thursday, 10/29/09 from 1pm to 3pm. Bidders may attend either via webinar or face to face at the NHDOE in Concord, NH. **Bidders are asked to contact Bev Straneva by 10/27/09 to indicate whether they will attend via webinar or in person.**

[This RFP is released by the Office of Educational Technology at the New Hampshire Department of Education on behalf of the NH K-12 Schools Connectivity Consortium. The NHDOE representative for this effort is Dr. Cathy Higgins.]

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

The objective of the Proposal Submission Requirements section is to provide Bidders with the information required to submit a response to this Request for Proposal (RFP).

1. Failure to follow any instruction within this RFP may, at the Consortium's sole discretion, result in the disqualification of the Bidder's proposal.
2. The NH K-12 Schools Connectivity Consortium has no obligation to locate or acknowledge any information in the Bidder's proposal that is not presented under the appropriate outline according to these instructions and in the proper location.
3. The Bidder's proposal must be received, in writing, by the Consortium Coordinator at the address listed on page one of this RFP by the date and time specified. The Consortium is not responsible for any delays in delivery or expenses for the development or delivery of proposals. Any proposal received after 5pm on 11/17/09 will be returned unopened.
4. Proposals or alterations by fax, e-mail, or phone will not be accepted.
5. It is the responsibility of the Bidder to clearly identify all costs associated with any item or series of items in this RFP. The Bidder must include and complete all parts of the cost proposal in a clear and accurate manner. Omissions, errors, misrepresentations, or inadequate details in the Bidder's cost proposal may be grounds for rejection of the Bidder's proposal. The bidder must include the current status of any lawsuits or other legal proceedings against the Bidder that pertain to any of the software, hardware, or other materials and/or services which are a part of the Bidder's proposal. Costs that are not clearly identified will be borne by the Bidder. The Bidder should supply supporting details.
6. The Consortium reserves the right to request additional information or clarification of a Bidder's proposal. The Bidder's cooperation during the evaluation process in providing the Consortium with adequate responses to requests for clarification will be considered a factor in the evaluation of the Bidder's overall responsiveness. Lack of such cooperation may, at the Consortium's discretion, result in the disqualification of the Bidder's proposal. Unsolicited clarifications and updates submitted after the deadline for proposals will be accepted or rejected at the sole discretion of the Consortium.
7. Unsolicited clarifications in the evaluation and selection of lowest and best proposal will be considered only if all the following conditions are met:
 - A clarification to a proposal that includes a newly announced product line or service with additional capability to be provided at or less than the proposed price will be considered.
 - Clarifications must be received early enough in the evaluation process to allow adequate time for re-evaluation.
 - The Bidder must submit a statement outlining the circumstances for the clarification.
 - The Bidder must be specific about which part of the original proposal is being changed by the clarification (i.e., must include exact RFP reference to section and outline point).
8. Communications with Staff: From the issue date of this RFP until a Contractor is selected and the selection is announced, responding Bidders may not communicate, either orally or in writing regarding this RFP with any member of the Consortium except as noted herein. To ensure equal treatment for each responding bidder, all questions regarding this RFP must be submitted in writing to the Consortium Coordinator for the selection process, and no later than Thursday, 11/05/09. All such questions will be answered officially by the Consortium in writing. All such

questions and answers will become addenda to this RFP, and they will be posted to the Consortium website. Bidders failing to comply with this requirement will be subject to disqualification.

9. Proposal as Property of Consortium: All written proposal material becomes the property of the Consortium. The Bidder must receive written approval from the Consortium lead entity before advertising or referencing the award of the contract or the services being provided. The Bidder must agree not to refer to awards in commercial advertising in such a manner as to state or imply that the firm or its services are endorsed or preferred by the Consortium.
10. Written Amendment to RFP: Any interpretation of this RFP will be made by written amendment only. The Consortium will not be responsible for any other explanation of this RFP. A copy of any amendment will be posted at <http://www.nheon.org/oet/erate/consortium.htm> along with the associated RFP specification. Bidders are required to check the website periodically for RFP amendments before the proposal closing date.
11. Oral Communications Not Binding: Only transactions which are in writing from the Consortium Coordinator or from the Consortium lead entity acting on behalf of the Consortium may be considered official. No negotiations, decisions, or actions shall be executed by any Bidder as a result of individual discussions with Consortium members.
12. The successful Bidder should not commence any billable work until a valid contract has been executed. Any work done by the successful Bidder prior to the execution of the contract is done at the Bidder's sole risk. The Consortium lead entity, Consortium Coordinator, and Consortium members are under no obligation to pay for work done prior to the execution of a contract.

INTRODUCTION

The New Hampshire K-12 Schools Connectivity Consortium has been formed by K-12 school districts for the purpose of maximizing group purchase pricing on E-Rate eligible services. The E-Rate Form 470 has been filed on behalf of all K-12 public and private schools. An advisory committee will review all proposals using the evaluation criteria included in this RFP. Consortium members will use various means of communication to notify NH schools of the existence of this consortium opportunity. Participation by schools is voluntary.

GOALS / SCOPE OF WORK

Required Elements

All responses should describe how the managed service provider will deliver services in an effective and timely manner to facilitate school access to the Internet:

1. Bidder should show evidence that it understands and will comply with all related requirements associated with FCC / USAC Schools and Libraries E-Rate Program.
2. Bidders must propose a monthly recurring charge and any related one time charges for each specified bandwidth and each location.
3. Bidders should provide data regarding service reliability, such as a percentage of constant connectivity.
4. Bidders should provide complete contact and background information on their organization, with evidence of high quality service, such as customer satisfaction surveys, and client references.
5. Bidder should provide a project work plan with a breakdown of the major phases of deliverables outlined in this RFP.

6. Bidder will describe its response strategy regarding any service outages that occur by local providers, including problem resolution estimates for each category of severity and how problems would be escalated from minor, major, and critical.
7. At the district's option, provider will offer server co-location or hosting option at provider's data center.
8. At the district's option, provider will prepare and submit E-Rate BEAR forms and bill the district the discounted amount.
9. Assuming some bidders may not have existing Internet connectivity to all localities in NH, project plans should describe how the bidder would work with current NH Internet providers.

All responses should include the following elements of **High Speed Internet Access**, with appropriate descriptions and details to illustrate how the provider would meet these requirements:

1. Upload speeds ranging from a minimum of 512K to at least 15MB with individual entities able to specify their preferred level of service.
2. Download speeds ranging from a minimum of 4MB to at least 1GB with individual entities able to specify their preferred level of service.
3. The option of participating district to utilize connection hardware, configuration, and management of such hardware and connectivity supplied by provider.
4. Point to point WAN coverage between buildings for individual entities as needed.
5. Access to network utilization statistics.
6. Retention, deletion, and reporting of internet access logs must be customizable to adhere to local entity retention policies.
7. 24/7 technical support with next-day on-site hardware replacement as needed.
8. Provision of static public IP addresses to each participating school to meet school's minimum requirements.

Optional Elements

NH schools indicated that the following optional elements might be desired services of some districts. Thus, all responses may include the following elements as value added options. If included, please provide appropriate descriptions and details to illustrate how the provider would address these elements. In order to ensure fairness to all Bidders, no additional points will be awarded to proposals containing any of the following:

1. If **Internet content filtering** is provided, schools should be able to administer such services at the school and district levels. Provider will provide design specifications and pricing on filtering services for the entire K-12 Consortium. The filtering services must meet the requirements of the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA). The proposed filtering solution will replace individual filtering solutions already in place in each of the individual entities and, therefore, may be implemented in phases as entities elect to switch to the consortium filtering solution. Filtering solution must allow for each entity to manage bandwidth and to override initial configuration settings and open up or restrict specific sites, categories of sites, and categories of content by user profiles. Retention, deletion, and reporting of internet filter logs must be customizable to adhere to local entity retention policies.
2. If an **email collaboration suite** is provided, the proposed solution would allow replacement of individual solutions already in place in each of the individual entities and, therefore, may be implemented in phases as entities elect to switch to the consortium email solution.
3. If an **off-site data storage and disaster recovery solutions** is provided, the proposed storage and disaster recovery solution would allow replacement of individual solutions already in place in each of the individual entities and, therefore, may be implemented in phases as entities elect to switch to the consortium solution.

COST OF SERVICES

For each of the elements described in this RFP, provide an appropriate breakdown of costs in sufficient detail to allow the Consortium as well as individual schools to make an informed decision about purchasing of services. Payment of all solicited services is the responsibility of the billed entities as identified on the Form 471. The NHDOE, the Consortium Coordinator, and the NH K-12 Schools Connectivity Consortium are not responsible for any payments, billing issues, or invoicing issues resulting from an agreement based upon contracts generated by this RFP. Governing authorities of the K-12 Schools will work directly with the awarded Vendor(s) for all billing and service related issues. In the event that a conflict arises between the Vendor's business practices and a billed entity's master plans, policies, and procedures, both parties agree to meet and negotiate an understanding and realignment of this partnership. Any failure to cure such a conflict shall be grounds for termination of any agreement between the billed entity and the Vendor.

EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS

An analysis and evaluation of all proposals will be made to select one provider that best meets the needs and requirements of New Hampshire schools. E-Rate rules require a formal evaluation process. There will be a proposal evaluation committee composed of representatives from several NH school districts and facilitated by the NHDOE and the Consortium Coordinator. The intent in issuing this RFP is to award a contract to the lowest and best responsive Bidder who meets specifications, when considering price and other factors.

The E-Rate Application Process requires applicants to retain documentation on the bidding process and outcome for a minimum of 5 years. Accordingly, the Consortium and its members will ensure that documentation related to this RFP is retained in a manner consistent with the E-Rate Program requirements.

Evaluation will be based on the following criteria and 100 point system:

| Factor | Weight |
|---|---------------|
| Price of the ELIGIBLE goods and services | 30% |
| Management and technical support capability | 25% |
| Technical solution | 20% |
| Capacity for sustainability | 15% |
| Prior experience | 10% |
| Total | 100% |

AWARD OF CONTRACT

A contract is considered to be awarded to a Bidder through notification made to Bidders on letterhead of the Consortium lead entity and/or notification posted to the Consortium information website.