

North Central Washington Libraries

E-RATE BEN 145379

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

Title	Quote Due Date
2023 NCW Internet Access and WAN	28 Days from posting of 470 Form

Submit bids and direct questions to:

Contact: Claire O’Flaherty, Consultant, E-Rate Expertise, Inc.
Phone: (253) 320-0664
Email: claire@erateexpertise.com

SCOPE:

North Central Washington Libraries (NCW) seeks internet access and connectivity for their 30 branches and distribution center. The current system architecture consists of direct internet connections to all locations, and the branches connect to the distribution center via those internet connections. Almost all branches currently have 100 Mb fiber connections via PUD owned lines that are subcontracted by E-rate eligible service providers, but a few of the remote locations have different connection types and significantly less bandwidth. See the bid format spreadsheet for the current speeds and circuit types.

NCW prefers speeds of at least 100 Mb, depending on cost and availability, but the potential speed range over the term of the contract could be 10 Mb to 10 Gb. The Library may choose to maintain or upgrade circuit speeds as needed during the contract period and may add additional locations in the event of branch openings, relocations, or other circumstances. Upgrades would be made via service/change orders or amendments to the contract. NCW will consider 1-year, 3-year and 5-year contract terms, with possible extensions. Month-to-month arrangements would also be acceptable as needed.

Auto-generated bids that are not specifically created as a response to this RFP will be disqualified and will not be evaluated.

BID REQUIREMENTS:

1. Bids should be submitted in the format outlined in the uploaded bid format spreadsheet on the 470 form. See 2023 NCW Internet and WAN Bid Format Spreadsheet.docx for details. An invoice from an existing month-to-month provider may also be used as a bid.

2. Please provide separate bid sheets with costs for 1-year, 3-year and 5-year contracts.
3. The Bid Format spreadsheet indicates the current circuit types, but bids with other proposed equivalent circuit types will also be evaluated for affordability and cost-effectiveness to meet Library system demands.
4. Submit a copy of your standard contract with terms for service, including a Service Order. This RFP, and the completed bid spreadsheet with vendor's costs become addendums to the contract. If all terms and conditions of the vendor's standard contract and service order are acceptable to the Library, the contract may be signed by the Library for E-rate submittal purposes.
5. Bids should include an example of the monthly billing statement that includes all estimated costs, taxes and fees for different levels of service at each location. Billing shall be monthly, net 30 days.
6. Non-recurring charges, set-up or installation fees (if any) should be included.
7. If your bid requires construction, please provide a description of the scope of the project, required timeline, the guaranteed start date. Include your financial compensation policy for any late service starts. The E-Rate definition of Special Construction is as follows: "For the purposes of the E-Rate program, special construction charges are the upfront, non-recurring costs of deploying new or upgraded network facilities to E-Rate eligible entities. Special construction consists of three components: (1) Construction of network facilities, (2) Design and engineering and (3) Project management. Special construction does not include charges for Network Equipment, i.e., modulating electronics and other equipment necessary to make a Category One service functional."
8. Provide qualifications and experience of the dedicated project manager for implementation and customer service.
9. If a proposal includes an SLA, it should contain a description of the services provided and how these services will be measured. At a minimum, an SLA should describe that the vendor will make all reasonable efforts to ensure 99.99% network availability of each circuit, and it should provide frame/packet loss, network latency, and network jitter commitments. Additionally, the SLA should describe 24x7x365 trouble-reporting procedures, offer commitments with regard to the time to repair outages, and describe provisions offered in the event of chronic trouble. The services described in the SLA shall be maintained to the specifications of these commitments throughout the term of the contract, and the selected vendor shall remediate any deficiencies at no cost to the Library. Additional features, such as DDoS protection, should also be described.
10. Bids should include up to three (3) reference sites where your company has performed a similar service, including business name, contact name and contact information. It is preferable that at least one reference should be for a library/school district of similar size within 200 miles of Library.
11. All bidders must have a current SPIN number and be eligible and certified by USAC to deliver telecommunications services and/or Internet Access during the life of the contract. Failure to maintain this status could result in contract termination. Vendor must be willing to do either SPI or BEAR methods of reimbursement.

Instructions for filling out the bid format spreadsheet:

1. List your company name and SPIN number. Enter the Contract Term length (1-year, 3-year, or 5-year) and submit separate spreadsheets for each term length. Are you current on your 2023 SPAC/473 requirements? How many years of experience do you have working with the E-rate program?

2. Fill in the circuit type you are proposing. Indicate your current maximum speed for your circuit types since the Library may require capacity beyond the listed speeds in the bid format over the life of the contract.
3. The Library seeks quotes for speeds from 10 Mb – 10 G. Please fill in the cost for each speed. Do not submit costs in boxes marked N/A. A complete listing of available speeds and costs within the range in the scope of this RFP will be included in the contract with the selected vendor. If all prices are not available at this time, prices for higher speeds may be added via an amendment to the contract.
4. Itemize any nonrecurring set-up and/or installation fees.
5. List any applicable taxes and fees (including network access fees, regulatory fees, surcharges, etc.) for these services (% of MRC estimate is acceptable).
6. Indicate if the lines have already been built and give the GUARANTEED service availability date. If your bid requires construction, please provide a description of the scope of the project and the required timeline. Include your financial compensation policy for any late service starts.
7. Indicate if your company owns the lines for the service you are proposing. If not, then provide the name of company that owns the lines and the length of time you have worked with this other company.
8. Indicate if speeds can be burstable during peak usage periods. Indicate if Static IP is available and the cost/line.

VENDOR CONTRACT ISSUES:

The new contract for these services will include a copy of the vendor’s submitted proposal/quote, the terms outlined below and elsewhere in this RFP, and additional terms provided by the vendor and agreed upon by Library.

1. **Start Date:** Library seeks a guaranteed start date of July 1, 2023 for all service.
2. **Term:** Library seeks either a 1-year, a 3-year, or a 5-year contract with the option to automatically extend for annual renewal period(s) at the same rate. The contract would revert to a Month-to-Month arrangement at the same prices after the completion of the original term and extension. The Library would consider other contract periods if they resulted in lower pricing. If the market supports a price reduction after the initial term, the library will exercise price reduction options, if any are available, as an amendment to the original contract.
3. **Non-Appropriation of Funds:** The contract may be canceled or not renewed in the event of loss of federal E-rate, State or Library funds.
4. **Service Changes as Amendments:** Within the scope of this RFP and the signed contract, the Library may seek to increase speeds, change circuit types, add lines, or add service to an existing or new branch through change orders/contract amendments with the selected vendor to meet future system needs and to ensure cost effectiveness of the service. These changes may be the result of the need for greater capacity, greater cost effectiveness, expiration of existing contracts, new branch openings or other circumstances. If unforeseen market forces (i.e. resulting from the pandemic) affect the price of

quotes from the winning bid, amendments can be made to update the pricing. If different services are phased in over time, the original contract termination date will remain the same.

5. **Activation:** Vendors shall notify Library in writing upon completion of installation of all required circuits. Library shall have up to two weeks to reconfigure their systems and test that the services are functioning properly and will notify vendor in writing of their acceptance of the service. Billing may commence upon the Library's acceptance of the service.
6. **Service Level Agreement:** A mutually agreed upon Service Level Agreement (SLA) may be included in the contract.
7. **Secure Networks Act:** Library will not accept any equipment or services produced, provided by or containing parts, from any company, including parents, affiliates, or subsidiaries thereof, that the FCC has designated as a national security threat to the integrity of communications networks or the communications supply chain pursuant to 47 CFR 54.9(a). A list of covered communications equipment and services can be found on the FCC's website at <https://www.fcc.gov/supplychain/coveredlist>. The list will be updated as necessary, and proposers have the responsibility to check for updates and ensuring that all products and services in quotes and final contracts are compliant.

BID PROCESS, EVALUATION & CONTACT INFORMATION:

Bidding Process Information:

1. Bids are due 28 days after the posting of the 470 form. Bidding period may be extended at the library's discretion if necessary to conduct a competitive bidding process.
2. The Library reserves the right to request additional information and/or a Best And Final Offer (BAFO) during this bidding process as responses are compared and evaluated.
3. The Library reserves the right to reject all proposals and to not pursue this project at this time.
4. Responders are required to read and understand all information contained within this entire RFP package. Submitting a bid constitutes complete understanding and compliance with the terms and conditions in this RFP.

Evaluation Criteria for Selecting the Winning Bid:

Proposals will be judged on the following criteria:

1. 30 Points Price - Least cost for the capacity and reliability that meets the Library's needs (most heavily weighted criteria)
2. 25 Points Capacity and reliability of proposed service meets library's needs
3. 20 Points Ability to serve the most locations while providing the most comprehensive and cost-effective services that meet the Library's needs
4. 10 Points Completeness, quality, and reliability of the proposal
5. 15 Points Local, in-state or regional vendor; Prior positive experience with the vendor/positive reports from references

Disqualifying Factors:

Generic/auto-generated bids that are not specifically created as a response to this RFP will be disqualified and will not be evaluated.

Contact, Submittal & Misc. Information:

1. Interested bidders should provide their contact information to claire@erateexpertise.com in order to receive notifications, updates and Q&A regarding this RFP.
2. Questions regarding the RFP should be submitted in writing to Claire O’Flaherty at claire@erateexpertise.com no later than 7 days before the bid deadline to ensure that information can be disseminated to all interested bidders.
3. Bids should be submitted electronically to Claire O’Flaherty, claire@erateexpertise.com and copied to afloyd@ncwlibraries.org by 5 p.m. Pacific Time on the due date which is 28 days after the posting of the 470 form.
4. All RFP documents, including instructions, bid formats, Q&A, updates, etc. will be uploaded to the original E-Rate 470 form and will also be posted on the Library’s website at <https://www.ncwlibraries.org/bids/>
5. For Library branch addresses, please see <https://www.ncwlibraries.org/locations/>