

PIERCE COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM

E-RATE BEN 145283

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

Title	Quote Due Date
2023 Internet & WAN Services for Hard-Wired and Wi-Fi Populations Rev	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:

The Pierce County Library System seeks internet and WAN connectivity service at its library branches.

Under the current architecture, each branch has a fiber WAN connection between the branch building and the system hub at the Administrative Center Library Branch. Internet access for hard-wired computers is currently provided via a single fiber connection from the service provider to the Administrative Center Library Branch and the traffic then travels to the branches via the fiber WAN connections. These connections must be robust and reliable, and a Service Level Agreement (SLA) is required for service to this population. The circuits must have the same upload and download speeds.

Internet access for Wi-Fi users is currently provided separately by direct internet access connections from the service providers to each branch building. PCLS uses either fiber or cable direct internet connections at the branches for the Wi-Fi population, depending on availability. In the next contract, the library will choose the most cost-effective circuit type using current technologies to meet the demands for this service. An SLA is not required for service to this population and the circuits do not have to have the same upload and download speeds. Preference will be given to vendors that can provide service to the most branches.

The attached bid format spreadsheet gives the details for the existing circuit types and speeds at the branches in the library system. At this time, the library seeks at least 1 G speeds for all circuits. The potential speed range for Internet and WAN for both the hard-wired and Wi-Fi internet circuits over the life of this contract could range from 1 to 10 Gb. If the 1 Gb desired minimum speed is not available for a specific location(s), the speed must be at least 100 Mb. Please see the uploaded PCLS Internet and WAN bid format spreadsheet for details on current circuits and requested speed quotes. Bids should include costs for all speeds listed on the attached bid format spreadsheet. Alternative architectures may be proposed (such

as WAN service provided over internet access lines or other options) but the hard-wired and Wi-Fi populations must be segmented.

Note that PCLS is currently considering options to relocate and/or open a new branch in Lakewood and will work with the winning vendor to determine the costs of the various options under consideration. Any contracts would be amended to address the associated one-time and ongoing costs of the selected plan.

The Library will not consider generic/auto-generated bids and will disqualify bids that are not specifically created in response to this RFP.

BID FORMAT & REQUIREMENTS:

1. Bids must be submitted in the format outlined in the uploaded bid format spreadsheet on the 470 form. See 2023 PCLS Cat 1 Internet WAN Bid Spreadsheet.xls for details.
2. Please provide separate bid sheets with costs for BOTH 3-year and 5-year contracts.
3. The Bid Format spreadsheet indicates the current circuit types, but bids with other proposed circuit types will also be evaluated for affordability and cost-effective solutions 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. If your bid includes special construction as defined by E-rate, please provide a description of the scope of the project and the required timeline. 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."
7. Provide qualifications and experience of the dedicated project manager for implementation and customer service.
8. 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.

9. 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.

Instructions for filling out the bid format spreadsheet:

1. List your company name and SPIN number. Enter the Contract 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? 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.
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 costs for speeds from 1 – 10 Gb. Please fill in the cost for each speed. If a minimum of 1 Gb is not available, please indicate costs for your maximum available 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, 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.
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:

1. **Start Date:** Library seeks a guaranteed start date of July 1, 2023 for all service.
2. **Term:** Library seeks either a 3-year or a 5-year contract with the option to automatically extend for one (1) annual renewal period 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. 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. 35 Points Price - Least cost for the capacity and reliability that meets the Library's needs (most heavily weighted criteria)
2. 20 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

If the winning vendor cannot provide service to all locations, then a separate contract for the missing locations may be awarded to another vendor in accordance with the above criteria.

Disqualifying Factors:

The Library will not consider generic/auto-generated bids and will disqualify bids that are not specifically created in response to this RFP.

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 to Claire O'Flaherty, claire@erateexpertise.com and copied to Clifford Jo cjo@piercecountylibrary.org.
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 PCLS website at <https://www.piercecountylibrary.org/about-us/administration/finance/Default.htm>
5. Bidding period will last 28 days from the date the 470 application is posted but may be extended at Library's discretion if necessary to conduct a competitive bidding process.
6. For Library branch addresses, please see <https://www.piercecountylibrary.org/branches/branch-listing.htm>