STATE OF WASHINGTON
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON STATE LIBRARY

RFP 23-05 – E-Rate Category 2 Equipment, Managed Services and Support
for the Washington State Library Technology Consortium (LIBTECH)

AMENDMENT NO. 3

(January 19, 2023)

SUMMARY

This Amendment No. 3 to RFP 23-05:

I.   Clarifies what "managed service option" means in the context of Category 1 services, and what it means in the context of Category 2 services; and

II.   Modifies RFP 23-05 to specifically include a requirement for vendor references in proposals submitted; and

III.   Compiles the questions received from vendors after the Pre-Proposal Conference held jointly for RFP 23-04 and RFP 23-05 on January 6, 2023, up through the deadline for vendors to submit questions – January 13, 2023 – and provides answers to those questions.

Note: Please accept our apologies for the delayed posting of the questions and answers. Many good questions were posed and additional time was needed to provide all vendors with complete answers, as well as some clarifications elsewhere in the RFP. In an effort to avoid inadvertent omission of important information, and to present vendors with a complete picture of this comprehensive project, both the questions and answers relevant to this RFP and to RFP 23-04 are included below.

I.   **MANAGED SERVICE OPTION**

CATEGORY 1:   In the context of Category 1 services, "managed service option" means the ISP owns and manages all ISP equipment required to provide services guaranteeing Class of Service flags, Service Level agreement uptimes, and routing complexities of large DIA, WAN and mesh networks.

CATEGORY 2:   In the context of Category 2 services, "managed service option" means the libraries do not purchase or own the (LAN) equipment; instead, the vendor is responsible for providing the equipment, its installation, related accessories, licensing, maintenance, monitoring, and technical support, among other things.

II. VENDOR REFERENCES

The following provision is hereby incorporated into RFP 23-05 by this reference as Section 3.1(M):

> M. The Proposal should include up to three (3) reference sites where the Contractor has performed a similar service, including business/organization name, contact name and contact information (including address, telephone number and email address). It is preferable that at least one reference should be for a library/school district within Washington State. The Contractor must grant permission to OSOS to contact the references. The references shall not include current OSOS staff.

III. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q: As noted in RFP 23-04, it states that there is a concurrent RFP 23-05. Assuming a contractor/carrier applies for only RFP 23-04 and creates a network design that meets the requirement for a managed service (SD/WAN, MPLS or equivalent) and Internet, is it mandatory for the contractor/carrier to apply for both RFP's in order to meet the current RFP request or will they be disqualified if they apply for one and not both? In this scenario, contractor/carrier applies for RFP 23-04 of which all equipment belongs to the contractor/carrier.

A: It is not mandatory that vendors submit proposals for both RFP 23-04 and RFP 23-05, and failure to do so will not, in itself, result in the disqualification of a proposal.

Q: My focus is on core competencies of the contractor. Not all contractors/carriers can or want to support LAN networks (Routers, Switches and Wireless). With that said, can an equipment vendor apply for only RFP 23-05 for equipment only and not be disqualified if they do not apply for RFP 23-04?

A: As stated in the answer to the immediately preceding question, it is not mandatory that vendors bid on both RFPs, and failure to do so will not, in itself, result in disqualification of a proposal. Libraries are not purchasing equipment under RFP 23-05; vendors are asked to submit proposals with a managed service option, which includes provision of the equipment as a part of that service and support to libraries. Please refer to Section I of this Amendment No. 3 for additional information regarding the "managed service option" as it pertains to Category 1 and Category 2 services. A vendor's failure to include a managed service option in its proposal is a disqualifying factor.

Q: Upon completion of the chosen managed network (SD/WAN, MPLS, Internet or Equivalent) by contractor/carrier X, what entity is responsible for the LAN management and connectivity at all the libraries?

A: We are looking for a managed service program where the successful bidder under RFP 23-05 is responsible, per the terms of the awarded contract, for the LAN management and connectivity at all of the libraries.

Q: Do you expect the winner of the WAN and Internet to be responsible for setting up LAN at all Libraries?

A: No. The vendor selected as the successful bidder under RFP 23-05 would be responsible for the LAN under the awarded contract.

Q: RFP 23-05 has a lot of existing equipment to include routers, switches, and wireless. Is LIBTECH expecting the successful contractor/carrier(s) to implement a wireless solution for all Libraries?

A: If the equipment is already in place, the vendor awarded the contract under RFP 23-05 will manage it. If the equipment is new, the vendor awarded the contract under RFP 23-05 will install and manage it. We expect the successful bidder under RFP 23-05 to manage all existing and all new equipment to our specifications under the awarded contract.

Q: Are the public library wireless solutions a public wireless access and is it a Private IP Address space?

A: Some libraries provide public access, some do not.   Most use private spaces. All libraries joining LIBTECH would use a private space for public WIFI.

Q: RFP 23-04, Exhibit E includes a Guaranteed Service Date (column U). Service Dates can be impacted by many factors outside of the vendors control i.e. permits, weather conditions, etc. impacting the standard implementation intervals. Would SOS accept an estimated service delivery date which could be refined once orders are issued?

A: The goals in requesting a guaranteed service date here are two-fold: Avoid (1) being charged before the circuit goes live (including during the resolution or persistence of any delays), and (2) being stuck on the old circuit with an expensive month-to-month bill.   Having a guaranteed service date enables anticipation and avoidance (to the extent possible) of these issues that can occur during the transition from old contracts to new. Since delays can result in additional costs and potential loss of grant funding for member libraries, vendors should be conservative in their estimates to account for commonly experienced delays and risks attendant to the work to be performed.   With the foregoing in mind, providing an anticipated or estimated service delivery date, together with a worst-case service delivery date, would be acceptable. Providing a start-date range in cases where risk is anticipated would also be acceptable, as would providing the length of time required for start-up once the order is placed. We wouldn't expect these dates to factor in what would typically be characterized as force majeure events or acts of God, but would expect customary and anticipated processes, such as permitting and construction, and any other attendant risks to on-schedule performance, to be factored in. Dates can be refined once orders are issued.

Q: RFP 23-04, Exhibit E includes NRC Set-up/Installation (Column S). Install prices vary based on equipment and there's a large jump in equipment prices when moving from 1G to 2G/5G. Would SOS be amendable to receiving two price sheets to ensure the correct install charges are assessed to the correct service? They would be submitted as follows:

1. **100Mb, 500Mb and 1G with associated NRC/Installation**
2. **2G and 5G with associated NRC/Installation**

A: Yes, that would be acceptable and welcomed.

Q: RFP 23-05, Section 4.4 – Evaluation Weighting and Scoring includes References and Prior Experience with a 15% weighting. References are not identified in the body of the RFP. Is it SOS' intent to include references in our bid response to this RFP?

A: Yes. This was an inadvertent omission in RFP 23-05. Vendors' proposals submitted in response to RFP 23-05 should include references as detailed in Amendment No. 3 to RFP 23-05.

Q: RFP 23-05, Exhibit E includes a line item for an Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS). Should the proposed UPS be rack mounted?

A: Yes.

Q: RFP 23-05, Exhibit E, Column M requests a proposed Monthly Recurring Cost (MRC)/Unit for New Equipment Added in Year 5 of Contract. Cisco Meraki has a minimum commitment requirement of 12 months. Would SOS provide guidance on what to include in Column M given the manufacturer's 12 month minimum commitment requirement?

A: In this circumstance, the expectation would be that the vendor would list Year 5 as N/A, and state that the manufacturer will not commit to less than 12 months.

Q: Will existing equipment be replaced? If so please provide which site and what product? Please provide new device allocation count with Product type per location? Please provide information for sites with existing devices including product type, product count and product count per site? Will there be a standard design or blue print based on Library size- XS,S,M,L?

A: The existing equipment, located at those library sites identified as Phase 1A for 2023 in the revised Exhibit D- *LIBTECH Membership and Phases*, is new Cisco Meraki equipment that was funded by another grant source and will not be replaced. Libraries joining the program after the first year of the contract will have equipment provided to them under the contract awarded pursuant to RFP 23-05. The plan is that all sites will receive 1 router/firewall, 2-3 switches, and 5-10 Wireless Access Points, depending on location, size of building(s), etc. Note that some libraries may not have sufficient funding for all of this equipment, but the goal is to find additional grant funds over the next five years to fully outfit the libraries with this equipment. All libraries are receiving the same models, all will be using fiber SFP+, and all switches will be stacked. The details for each individual library will be worked out with the contract awardee.

Q: Are floor plans available with scale for all sites?

A: No

Q: How many IDF/MDF per site?

A: It varies from 0-3.

Q: Please provide specific need for Meraki MS250-48FP-HW switch and if the MS210 or MS250 can be used as an equivalent?

A: Meraki MS250-48FP-HW has most of desired the capabilities for our standardized solution, but similar makes and models will also be evaluated and considered, as other makes and models may be appropriate for certain scenarios. All switches need to be POE.

Q: Will the sites that were added RFP 23 04 Exhibit D revised be added to the entity list on the SPIN?

A: A SPIN is for an E-rate Service Provider, and the LIBTECH Consortium is an E-rate program Applicant with the BEN # 17033416. All the confirmed consortium members in Phase 1A that have Billed Entity Numbers (BENs) have been associated with the LIBTECH BEN # in the USAC system. The Grandview and Roslyn libraries do not have BENs yet and will need to be added through a special process later since the E-rate Administrative Filing Window has closed. Note that if a library system with multiple branches is a member of the consortium, only their system BEN will appear on the USAC entity list and not the individual branches. The most accurate membership roster has been posted with the RFPs.

(*Vendor narrative preceding question*): *The core vision of OSOS is both forward-looking and innovative. However, the cost model presented may not be precisely aligned with the vision. The vision as articulated in the RFP states that "Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS)) that includes managed equipment and high levels of service and support since many library branches do not have dedicated IT staff to keep the equipment reliably operational." The TCO outlined in the RFP does not allow for a differentiating or innovative cost model, as it based on a cost per unit.*

Q: Would the evaluators consider a modified version of the per-device spreadsheet with a per site model?

A: No. The design of the existing billing model, technical model, and the structure of this RFP require that we keep the cost model as cost per unit.

Q: During the open forum, we asked if the consortium was open to alternative technical models. Would the evaluators confirm that alternative technical models would be considered? Y

A: Yes, alternative technical models may be suggested and will be considered, but they would need to follow a cost by unit basis.

(*Vendor narrative preceding question*): *The network-as-a-service model is to provide services; rather than develop a price per device, we establish a fixed price for the LAN that is based on square footage. Below is a sample of how we may respond if this option is granted.*

For example:

Wireless coverage will be architected to deliver a minimum of -67dBm primary coverage throughout the buildings.

Building size	Building SF size	Number of Wired - Ports	Price/Month
Small	Less than 5000 SF	96	$XXX.00
Medium	Between 5001-20,000 SF	192	$XXX.00
Large	Between 20,001-50,000 SF	288	$XXX.00

If this approach is accepted, we will gather the essential data and present up to 5 building size categories.

One of the advantages that this model brings to the consortium members is a fixed cost per building, which will simplify the eRate application.

There are multiple advantages to this fixed price per building approach:

1. *No need to sacrifice a building's optimial design to reduce costs*
2. *No need for pre-eRate application design from any vendor*
3. *It protects the consortium from over or under buying equipment*
4. *Simplifying the administration of the procurement*
5. *Consistent wireless performance for all libraries*
6. *Members of the consortium would know their pricing without any design work*

Q: Would you consider the following minor changes to the current process? The purpose of this is to enable innovation, create budget stability and uniformity, and create "real world" cost predictability.
1. **Phase 1 is a technical evaluation in which no financial information is collected**
2. **Hold a conference call with all vendors to collect other vendors' thoughts and insights**
3. **Internally develop a new cost model**
4. **Create a Phase 1A, or augment Phase 2, and provide the top scoring technical vendors with a new cost spreadsheet to complete**
5. **Combine the scores from the two phases to arrive at the winning candidate**

A: Your thoughtful consideration of this process and suggested alternative approaches are very much welcomed and appreciated. As noted above, however, we have developed internal estimates of the number of each unit required and prefer to use this cost/unit model rather than a cost/location model for the project. Also, given the constraints of the E-rate funding cycle and the process that has already been put in place, we are not able to change the course according to your suggestions. All prospective bidders have access to the same information, and each vendor's proposal will be evaluated based on the criteria outlined in the relevant RFP to which the proposal is responsive. Once the successful vendor or vendors have been selected, the Washington State Library will work with that vendor or vendors to refine the details and costs into the final program plan and contract.