



**New Hampshire K-12 Schools
Connectivity Consortium**

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
For
Internet Access and Additional Services**

Released: September 30, 2010

See <http://www.nheon.org/oet/eRate/consortium.htm> for downloads and updates.

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This request is made 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. For questions, please contact Beverly Straneva, Connectivity Consortium Coordinator at bstraneva@keene.edu or 603.358.2750.

TIMELINE

RFI Release Date:	Monday, September 13, 2010 from 9-11 AM - Bidders RFI meeting was held via webinar. Input from potential bidders and steering committee members was used to shape the RFP. Steering Committee met from 11 – 12:30 PM to review input from webinar.
Comment Period:	Comments and questions from prospective providers were accepted during the period of 9/13 to 9/17/2010. Clarifications are posted online.
District Tech Plan Notice:	Thursday, September 30, 2010 - All NH school districts notified of consortium opportunity and necessity of ensuring that their draft tech plan exists within the district.
RFP Release and Form 470 Posting Date:	Thursday, September 30, 2010
RFP Questions Due Date:	Thursday, October 7, 2010 by 5 PM - All questions about the posted RFP should be sent to chiggins@ed.state.nh.us by this date, with cc sent to the Consortium Coordinator at bstraneva@keene.edu .
Provider Bids Due Date:	Thursday, November 4, 2010 by 5 PM
Committee Review of Bids:	Monday, November 15, 2010 - Steering Committee meets at NHDOE in State Board Room. All members must attend 9 - 3 PM. It is possible that bidders might be invited to give a final presentation on this date from 9-noon if there are additional questions.
Anticipated Notification Date:	No later than Thursday, November 18, 2010
Service Period Start Date:	July 1, 2011

INTRODUCTION

This Request for Proposals is issued by the New Hampshire K-12 Schools Connectivity Consortium (hereinafter referred to as the Consortium), which was formed by K-12 school districts, with facilitation assistance provided by the New Hampshire Department of Education, for the purpose of maximizing group purchase pricing on eRate eligible services.

The Consortium requests bids for a managed network service provider to provide Internet services for all state approved public and private K-12 schools in the state of New Hampshire. For the purpose of this Consortium, a managed network service provider is defined as an entity that provides, at a minimum, high speed Internet access at educational discount costs, eRate forms assistance, network technical assistance to districts with limited technology network support staffing, and additional service options such as Internet content filtering, an email collaboration suite, off-site data solutions, and VOIP.

An eRate Form 470 will be filed on the USAC Schools and Libraries Division website by the New Hampshire Department of Education (NHDOE) on behalf of this Consortium. Consortium members will use various means of communication to notify NH schools of the existence of this consortium opportunity. Participation by schools is voluntary. 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 time that schools in New Hampshire will have formed a purchasing consortium of this nature. Representatives from several schools 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 steering committee to select the most

appropriate and cost-effective provider for the Consortium. The Consortium, in accordance with eRate rules, will use the evaluation process and criteria 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 Proposals.

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

Submission Address and Due Date

Proposal submissions are due per the instructions below by Thursday, 11/04/2010. No faxed proposals will be accepted. No late applications will be considered.

- Submit one electronic copy via email to bstraneva@keene.edu by no later than 5 PM on 11/04/2010.
- Also submit one hard copy -- **postmarked** by no later than 11/04/2010 -- and mailed to:

Beverly Straneva (Connectivity Consortium Coordinator)
Southwestern NH Educational Support Center
c/o Keene State College, Mason Library, 229 Main Street, Keene, NH 03435

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 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 by the Consortium Coordinator according to the Submission Instructions within this RFP, including date, time, and formats requested. The Consortium is not responsible for any delays in delivery or expenses for the development or delivery of proposals.
4. Any proposal received after the proposal due date will be returned unopened.
5. Delivery of proposals electronically is required, as is one final hard copy by mail. Proposals or alterations by fax or phone will not be accepted.
6. 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 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.

7. The Consortium reserves the right to request additional information or clarification about 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.
8. Unsolicited clarifications will be considered as part of the proposal evaluation and selection process only if all the following conditions are met:
 - a. Clarification includes a newly announced product line or service with additional capability to be provided at or less than the proposed price.
 - b. Clarification is received early enough in the evaluation process to allow adequate time for re-evaluation.
 - c. The Bidder submits a statement outlining the circumstances for the clarification.
 - d. The Bidder is specific about which part of the original proposal is being changed by the clarification (i.e., includes exact RFP reference to section and outline point).
9. 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 via email to the Consortium Coordinator (bstraneva@keene.edu) AND to chiggins@ed.state.nh.us for the selection process, no later than Thursday, October 7, 2010. All such questions will be answered officially by the Consortium in writing, will become addenda to this RFP, and will be posted to the Consortium website. Bidders failing to comply with this requirement will be subject to disqualification.
10. Proposal as Property of Consortium: All written proposal material becomes the property of the Consortium for the purpose of evaluating and selecting a provider of services to the Consortium. **All proposals shall be considered public documents which, upon bid selection, must be available to the public upon request, per NH RSA 21-I:13-a,II.** 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.
11. 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.
12. 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.
13. The successful Bidder will not commence any billable work until a valid contract is 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.

Proposal Outline

Proposals should be organized according to Required Elements 1 through 9 below, followed by Additional Services 1 through 5, with corresponding cost details appropriately placed.

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 will provide complete **contact and background information** on its organization, with evidence of high quality service, such as customer satisfaction surveys, and client references.
2. Bidder will show evidence that it understands and will comply with all related requirements associated with the **FCC / USAC** Schools and Libraries eRate Program.
3. Bidder will provide a **project work plan** with a breakdown of the major phases of deliverables outlined in this RFP.
4. Bidder will propose a **monthly recurring charge** and any related one time charges for each specified bandwidth and each location. All responses should include the following elements of **High Speed Internet Access**, with appropriate descriptions, costs, and details to illustrate how the provider would meet these requirements:
 - a. Upload speeds ranging from a minimum of 1.5Mbps to 1GB with individual entities able to specify their preferred level of service.
 - b. Download speeds ranging from a minimum of 1.5Mbps to 1GB with individual entities able to specify their preferred level of service.
 - c. Option of participating districts to utilize provider supplied connection hardware with layer 3 routing and switching capability, configuration, and management to each end site within a wide area network.
 - d. Access to network utilization statistics.
 - e. Retention, deletion, and reporting of Internet access logs customizable to adhere to local entity retention policies.
 - f. 24/7 technical support with next-day on-site hardware replacement as needed.
 - g. Provision of public static IP addresses to each participating school to meet school's minimum requirements.
 - h. A standard price per school, as well as bundled prices on various options.
5. Bidder will provide data regarding **service reliability**, such as a percentage of constant connectivity.
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 will be escalated from minor, major, and critical.
7. At each district's option, provider will offer timely and knowledgeable **eRate expertise** to each member district to ensure the appropriate preparation and submission of eRate forms.
8. At each district's option, provider will offer **server co-location or hosting option** at provider's data center and will propose a monthly recurring charge and any related one time charges for such services.
9. Assuming some bidders may not have existing Internet connectivity to every locality in NH, project plans should describe how the bidder will work with current **NH Internet providers** in order to ensure that all public and private schools have the opportunity to participate in the Consortium.

Additional Services

NH schools indicated that the following additional services would be desired by some schools. Thus, all responses should include appropriate descriptions and details to illustrate how the provider will provide the following services as an option for districts, either through the provider's own resources or by partnering with another entity. If partnerships are formed, services to interested districts must still be

provided and billed through the primary provider, with pricing and partnership arrangements clearly indicated. Provider will include design specifications and pricing on services for the entire K-12 Consortium.

1. If a district desires to purchase **Internet content filtering**, schools will be able to administer such services at the school and district levels. The filtering service will meet the requirements of the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA). The proposed filtering solution replaces 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 will 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 will be customizable to adhere to local entity retention policies.
2. If a district desires to purchase an **email collaboration suite**, the proposed solution will 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 a district desires to purchase an **off-site data storage and disaster recovery solution**, the proposed solution will 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.
4. If a district desires to purchase **Voice Over Internet Phone (VOIP)**, the proposal for VOIP will allow replacement of voice connectivity 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. VOIP services will include the set up and maintenance of a web interface to the gateway router for voice service. Upgrading and maintenance of the internal voice infrastructure (gateway router to user) will not be part of the RFP options.
5. If a district desires to purchase **point to point WAN coverage** between buildings or for individual entities as needed, the proposed solution will indicate how this solution could be addressed and at what cost to the district. A brief survey will be sent to schools in order to provide preliminary data for this item. Results will be available on the Consortium website. Sample questions will include:
 - a. District Name, Contact Name, Contact Email and Phone, Number of Schools in District
 - b. Wide Area Network (WAN) - Does Internet connectivity originate from a central district location or does each school in your district have its own connectivity to an ISP?
 - Our connectivity is from a central district location (i.e., WAN)
 - Each school has its own connectivity, not through a WAN.
 - c. Do you want an Internet provider to offer WAN connectivity to your district, and if so, what level of connectivity / bandwidth speed would your district require?
 - No WAN connectivity needed
 - At least 1.5 Mbps
 - More than 1.5 Mbps but less than 1 GB
 - 1 GB

COST DETAILS

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 and school districts, to make an informed decision about purchasing of services. For any proposed costs that must be provided as approximate and not exact for any school site, the minimum and maximum costs **within a narrow range** must be clearly indicated. In addition, reasons for such approximation and the timeline for and method by which exact costs will be determined must be explained. Proposals that do not provide sufficient detail for Consortium

members to make an informed decision will be subject to disqualification. 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. Administrators 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 resolve 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. ERate 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, desired services, value-added services, and other factors.

The eRate 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 eRate Program requirements.

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

<u>Factor</u>	<u>Weight</u>
Price of the ELIGIBLE goods and services	30%
Management and technical support capability	25%
Technical solution	20%
Prior experience	15%
Additional services	10%
Total	100%

CONTRACT AWARD

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. **All proposals shall be considered public documents which, upon bid selection, must be available to the public upon request, per NH RSA 21-I:13-a,II.**

RFI Questions & Answers

- 1. Can you confirm that the requirements for a managed service include: the service provider needs to supply end site router or layer 3 switch equipment and that routing and management applies to all wide area network end sites in addition to Internet connections?**

See RFP required element 4c. Provider must include the option for districts to use provider supplied hardware, configuration, and management to layer 3 routing and switching standards, in which case it would be Priority 1 eligible. Any additional costs for doing so must be specified. Since districts are likely to have previously purchased their own routers, they may prefer to retain their own until an upgrade or replacement is needed. If they choose the latter, the provider would need to ensure district connectivity equipment is appropriately reconfigured.

- 2. Will there be requirements for BEAR or SPI invoicing?**

There are no specific invoicing requirements, however providers are expected to invoice schools in a clear format with as much detail as the school may require for accurate budgeting and accounting.

- 3. How many school districts does the Consortium predict will contract for services under the eRate Form 470 in years 1, 2, and 3?**

There is no sure way to predict this, but we estimate a small percentage of schools in the first year, increasing each year. Two factors are deemed to be the best predictors of increased participation: cost savings and valued quality service.

- 4. Are the school districts asking for managed Internet service only or school-wide, managed connectivity?**

At this point, the focus is on managed Internet service and assistance in securing eRate discounts for schools to receive the benefit of the eRate program.

- 5. The RFI contains the following statement: "3. Option of participating districts to utilize connection hardware, configuration, and management of such hardware and connectivity supplied by provider." Can the Consortium please clarify what this means?**

See response above and Required Element 4c.

- 6. The RFI states that the consortium prefers to award the contract to a single provider. Will the Consortium consider awarding parts of the bid to multiple providers? As an example, in order to attain a standard price per school at the best possible rate, would the Consortium consider awarding the network component to a single vendor?**

It is not anticipated that the Consortium would award a bid to more than one provider. The RFP is intended to establish an option for many schools to purchase from a common provider, resulting in the possibility of lowering costs while increasing services. Please see RFP Required Element 9.

- 7. Is there a need to provide inter-district WAN connectivity?**

In the case of SAUs with multiple districts, this is certainly a possibility but not a probability because of geographical issues.

- 8. Can the Consortium estimate the number or percent of school districts that will require each type of additional services? Will the Consortium consider awarding parts of the bid to multiple providers for the additional services? For example, the managed service for network components is awarded to a single vendor and the off-site data storage solution is awarded to their partner within the response.**

See response above and Required Element 9 and Additional Services opening paragraph. One major goal of this RFP is to assist schools.

- 9. Will the Consortium provide the list of providers (with contact information) to whom the RFP is being sent?**

The RFP is posted online at <http://www.nheon.org/oet/eRate/consortium.htm>