

Great Falls Public Schools a.k.a. Great Falls School District 1&A

1100 4th Street South

Great Falls, MT 59405

Funding Year (FY) 2024-2025 E-rate RFP for Internet Services

SLD Billed Entity Number: 134909

Applicant Form 470 Identifier: Great Falls Public Schools a.k.a. Great Falls School District 1&A _ 2024

_ Cat 1 _ Form 470

Contact Information

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Overview

Great Falls Public Schools a.k.a. Great Falls School District 1&A (hereafter collectively referred to as, “district”) seeks Request for Proposals (RFP) for internet services.

The objective of this RFP is to accomplish a fair, open, and competitive procurement.

The RFP is accessible electronically at www.gfps.k12.mt.us on the [Technology Department](#) webpage. The RFP is also accessible electronically at www.usac.org on the “Tools” webpage: <https://www.usac.org/e-rate/resources/tools/#FCC-Form-470-Tools> or by emailing Nicole Jones at njrwj@midrivers.com and requesting a copy of the RFP and related documents.

This RFP will be reviewed at the district Office Building located at 1100 4th Street South, Great Falls, MT.

Service providers may bid on one, all, or any number of options with the requested services and terms.

Physical on-site or virtual site visits are welcome. To set up a visit, please email Nicole Jones at njrwj@midrivers.com. Contacting District employees, board members, or other individuals outside the guidance of this RFP may be deemed as trying to circumvent the open and fair competitive bidding process and be grounds for bid dismissal.

Service providers must be capable of providing telecommunication services under the Universal Service Support Mechanism, be a registered vendor with USAC, and have a USAC issued 498 ID (formerly Service Provider Identification Number-SPIN) by the close of the RFP competitive bidding process.

Failure to follow the guidance of this RFP or other associated documents may be grounds for bid dismissal.

Requested Services

Requesting bids for internet services. Internet services and 1+/-static IP address, if applicable, is required to be delivered to the following location:

1. District Administration Center located at 1100 4th St. S., Great Falls MT 59405.

Bids may be accepted for delivery of internet services by any Erate eligible technology means available to meet the requested specifications. Bids should specify the technology used to deliver services (i.e., Ethernet, DSL, MPLS, wireless microwave, DS-1, satellite, etc.).

Seeking bids with incremental pricing options of 5, 10, and up to 25 Gbps download speeds.

May consider bonding multiple connections to get sufficient speeds to meet district's needs.

Preference may be given for bids that can offer some "future proofing" with scalable bandwidths up to 50 Gbps upload/ download speeds and/ or the option to upgrade during term of the agreement without an extension of contract.

Service Level Agreement

Service providers should state in writing how they will ensure Internet connectivity with effective throughput at subscribed bandwidth.

Service providers should provide monthly traffic monitoring and analysis to the school district.

The service provider shall assure there is no planned down time from Monday through Friday between the hours of 7:00 AM MST and 7:00 PM MST.

Technical support shall be available by person-to-person contact Monday through Friday during the hours of 8:00 AM MST through 5:00 PM MST. The proposal shall state in writing how this service is provided.

In addition, the service provider (internet provider) should state in writing what, if any, detailed technical support is offered – either at no charge or at a stated fee.

Service provider should specify how the above service levels are met.

Eligible Costs

Preference may be given to bids that are all inclusive for a turn-key service in which the district has no additional costs to initiate service beyond what is in bid. This includes estimated applicable installation, Federal, State, and/ or local taxes, fees, surcharges, non-recurring charges, networking equipment, etc. It is anticipated these will be estimated for the current quarter or the latest publicly available announcement for applicable adjusted taxes, fees, etc. Service providers that impose additional costs after bid submittal may be grounds for bid dismissal.

Preference may be given to bidders that can honor their pricing until receipt of a funding commitment decision letter.

Installation

Installation of services should be a solution providing a link into the network closet. Bringing solution to the property line is not sufficient to meet District needs and may be grounds for bid dismissal. Service providers should specify required demarcation setup included in base fees, e.g., wall mounted CPE and CAT6a handoff, rack mount patch panel, etc.

If installation is required, it is the responsibility of the service providers to have all required equipment including any type of lift/ ladders, garbage disposal, clean-up, that may be required

for a full-service bid. Facilities must be returned to pre-install condition once installation and/or any work is complete. Bids should acknowledge this requirement.

Estimated service start date is 7/1/2024 or as soon as feasible after receipt of an approved funding commitment decision letter (FCDL) or upon written notice to proceed from the district.

Taxes, Surcharges, and Misc Fees

Bids should include estimated Applicable Taxes (Federal and State) as separate line items from monthly recurring costs and can be added on the pricing worksheet as an addendum to the proposal.

Non-Recurring Costs/ Special Construction Costs

Proposals may include special construction charges or one-time non-recurring charges in connection with providing requested services.

Special construction charges eligible for Category One support consist of three components:

1. construction of network facilities
2. design and engineering
3. project management

Note: The term “special construction” does not include network equipment necessary to activate solutions such as light fiber for example, nor the services necessary to maintain the network. Charges for network equipment and network maintenance are eligible for Category One support as separate services, but not as special construction.

In E-Rate terminology, **special construction** refers to the upfront, non-recurring costs associated with the installation of new infrastructure to or between eligible entities. If no new infrastructure is being installed, then any installation costs are considered standard **non-recurring costs (NRC)**.

All options can include special construction or one-time E-rate eligible non-recurring costs as well as E-rate eligible recurring costs.

To the extent that the winning service provider installs additional infrastructure (i.e., for example extra strands of fiber, extra spectrum, etc.) for future proofing or business ventures, the winning service provider assumes full responsibility to ensure those incremental costs are allocated out of the special construction charges to the district in accordance with FCC rules and orders. If, after the issuance of the FCDL, USAC or the FCC determines that the winning service provider did not cost allocate those charges associated with the additional strands, the district will not be responsible for reimbursing the winning vendor and the winning vendor will assume all responsibilities deemed ineligible by USAC.

Networking or Modulating Equipment

Bids for Network or Modulating Equipment may be accepted for either purchasing out-right or leasing for a fully functional internet connection. Right to Use licensing or software for such equipment is also eligible as category 1 and should be included in the bid, only if it is required to make the networking/ modulating equipment functional. Not accepting bids for additional features such as stand-alone warranty, features that would qualify as BMIC, or features beyond the scope of basic functionality.

If equipment is required for service delivery such as routers, microwave, etc., bids should include the cost of the equipment as a separately identifiable cost, indicate if that cost is included in the monthly recurring bid cost, and the make and model of the proposed equipment that may be used for the service delivery.

Equipment must be from an E-rate eligible manufacturer. Bids that include equipment from companies listed on the FCC's National Security Threat List may be dismissed in whole or in part. Bids should include a statement confirming equipment is not from a company that is listed as a National Security Threat. Failure to make note of the manufacturing company may be grounds for bid dismissal.

Contracts/ Service Agreements

Requesting incremental pricing options for services with a Month-to-Month (MTM), 1-year, 2-year, and/ or 3-year terms of service. At its discretion, the district shall have the option to extend for an additional two (2) one (1) - year terms. The service provider should state the charges for an additional year if different from the base year. Bids should confirm agreement with this request.

Any required contracts, including any addendums, master service agreements, etc., for services are required by E-Rate rules to be signed prior to certification of Form 471. Thus, preference may be given to bids that include - a letter of intent or service agreement, including all terms and conditions associated with acceptance of bid, and that is signed by the service provider, ready to be accepted and signed by the district. Failure to include with the bid may result in bid dismissal. It is anticipated that by requesting this, the service agreement/ contract will be included in the bid submission to appropriately meet all deadlines. Service providers that add/ change terms and conditions after bid submittal and/ or bid acceptance may be grounds for bid dismissal.

Preference may be given to bids that include the attached pricing worksheet as an addendum to the bid. Please note, the pricing sheet is only meant as an addendum to the bid and not meant to be the entire bid. Additional information is requested through this RFP that may not be listed on the pricing sheet.

This request for proposal (RFP) does not commit the district to enter into any agreement, or to pay any expenses incurred in the preparation of any response to this request, or to ultimately

procure any contract for the provision of these services.

Actual quantities may vary from initial estimates. It is anticipated the district will only be billed for services and/ or equipment actually provided. Preference may be given to bids that specify acceptance of this condition.

The winning bidder may be required to adhere additional policies and/ or procedures, rules, regulations, etc. as required by District (i.e., installation after school hours or during vacation months, background checks, etc.) that may or may not be listed in this RFP document.

Bidding

Bids will be accepted until the Allowable Contract Date as stated on the associated Form 470 or 28 days after the latest posted RFP Amendment, whichever is later. If there are no RFP amendments, then the bid due date is 28 days after the certification date or the Allowable Contract Date (ACD) as noted on Form 470.

Bids may be emailed as an attachment to Brian Patrick at brian_patrick@gfps.k12.mt.us, Tom Hering at tom_hering@gfps.k12.mt.us, and Nicole Jones at njirwj@midrivers.com.

Bids may also be mailed to the ATTN: Tom Hering at the Great Falls Public Schools a.k.a. Great Falls School District 1&A at 1100 4th Street South; Great Falls, MT 59405. The district assumes no responsibility for delays caused by the U.S. Postal Service or any other delivery service.

Bids will be opened publicly at 10:30am MST at the GFPS District Office Building located at 1100 4th Street South, Great Falls, MT, 59405 two calendar days following bid due date.

The district reserves the right to cancel the procurement or accept or reject any or all bids in whole or part including late bids in accordance with MCA 18-4-303.

Bids from service providers without an E-Rate Service Provider Identification Number (SPIN) at the close of the competitive bidding period will be disqualified.

Questions

Responding service providers may request clarifications regarding specifications outlined in this RFP. Clarifying questions should be emailed to Nicole Jones at njirwj@midrivers.com.

Contacting District employees, board members, or other individuals outside of this RFP contact list may be deemed as trying to circumvent the open and fair competitive bidding process and be grounds for bid dismissal.

Relevant questions not addressed in the RFP or on the Form 470 and are not considered a cardinal rule change will be posted as an amendment to the RFP. It is the responsibility of service providers to monitor RFP amendments and/ or newly posted Form 470s.

The district reserves the right not to respond to inquiries that are not relevant to the requested equipment and/ or services on the posted Form 470 or are already addressed in the posted documents.

No customized service provider forms will be completed during the competitive bidding period.

It is the responsibility of the service providers to adhere to all applicable laws, licensing, permits, insurances, etc. (District, local, state, and/ or federal) as may be required for such a project and may be required to readily verify documentation at request of District.

The winning bidder may be required to adhere additional policies and/ or procedures, rules, regulations, etc. as required by District (i.e., installation after school hours or during vacation months, background checks, etc.) that may or may not be listed in this RPF document.

Bid Security

Bid security will not be required as part of the bid submittal process for this project.

Service provider E-Rate Compliance

It is the responsibility of the service provider/ bidder to know, understand, and act within the guidance of this RFP and the E-Rate program rules.

Responses not in compliance with the RFP, RFP Amendments, and/ or Form 470, incomplete responses, and/ or responses received after the allowable contract date may be deemed non-compliant with this RFP and at the district's discretion may be accepted or rejected.

Preference may be given to service providers submitting proposals under this RFP that provide a written statement that they agree to meet the following conditions relating to the E-rate program:

Service Provider Identification Number (SPIN) and FCC Registration Number (FCCRN)

The service provider shall provide a valid E-rate SPIN number (Service Provider Identification Number), in the Proposal submitted in response to this bid opportunity. The SPIN must be recognized by the SLD and FCC as an eligible telecommunications provider and therefore qualified to receive discounts under the Telecommunications Services bucket of the program. The Service provider also shall provide the company's FCC Registration Number.

Green Light Status

Service providers should provide proof of “Green Light Status.” The service provider should provide proof as a printout from the FCC website of status as an addendum to the Proposal submitted in response to this bid opportunity.

Service Provider Annual Certification Form

The Service provider agrees to timely submit to the SLD a completed Form 473, Service Provider Annual Certification form, which provides updated contact information to the SLD for the Service provider.

The Method of Invoicing

The district has the option to choose which method of invoicing best meets the district’s technology goals (i.e., BEAR – Billed Entity Applicant Reimbursement versus SPI – Service Provider Invoicing). If the SPI of invoicing is chosen, the service provider agrees to provide reimbursements to the district for discounts on eligible services received on or after the effective date of discounts and already paid for by the district. If not, no late charges may be billed.

Cooperation with District’s Preparation of E-rate Applications

The service provider agrees to provide information on a timely basis that the district requests for the district to timely apply for E-rate applications.

The service provider must agree to respond in a timely manner (within assigned deadlines) to any requests for information from district, USAC, FCC, State Agencies, or other agencies as needed and related to the E-Rate Program.

Separate Itemization of E-rate Eligible and Ineligible Products and Services The service provider shall separately itemize the cost of E-rate eligible and ineligible products and separate installation costs, if any. To determine what items are eligible, visit the E-rate Eligible Services List at <https://www.usac.org/e-rate/applicant-process/before-you-begin/eligible-services-list/> or call the SLD at 888-203-8100.

Compliance with E-rate Contract Signing Rules

The service provider must acknowledge in its proposal that the service provider will make every effort to have any contract addendums that may arise from this RFP signed in accordance with the E-rate contract signing rules. Further, the Service provider must acknowledge in its proposal that if the contract or addendum is signed outside of the E-Rate contract signing window, the service provider will disclose to the district, before soliciting the district’s execution of the contract, that the contract is not eligible for E-rate funding.

Non-Collusion Affidavit

At the district's discretion, the service provider may be required to execute an Affidavit of Non-Collusion to confirm that the service provider is not in violation of the anti-bid rigging state law provisions of the state procurement law, or in violation of the Federal Communication Commission's Fifth Report and Order, as codified in 47 C.F.R.

Guarantee to Meet Service Start Date

The service provider must be prepared to provide service starting July 1, 2024, or as soon as feasible after receipt of Funding Commitment Decision Letter (FCDL). If Service provider does not meet the agreed upon service start date, the service provider must guarantee to cover the loss of E-rate funding for the total discount that would have otherwise been received from the current provider during the interim period until Service provider is able to provide service.

Required Notice to Proceed and Funding Availability

Acceptance of winning bid is contingent on E-Rate, District Approval, and/ or Board's Approval. The district reserves the right to allow the contract to expire without implementation.

The district will follow the purchasing policies of the Great Falls Public Schools a.k.a. Great Falls School District 1&A Board requirements and procedures of the FCC's E-rate program as administered by the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) to be eligible for all available funding.

The implementation of any associated contracts resulting from this competitive bid process will be dependent on the district's issuance of a written Notice to Proceed. E-rate funding notification alone will not signify Notice to Proceed. It is expected that the service provider will only move forward once received written notification from district to proceed with the project.

Document Retention Requirements

The service provider agrees to retain documents as required by the E-Rate Program Rules, for 10 years from the last date of services for each FRN for each funding year.

Evaluation of Bids

The board and/ or district is overall responsible for the process of evaluating bids and selecting the service provider that can provide the most cost-effective solution to meet the district's needs and intent regarding services.

This RFP will be reviewed at the GFPS District Office Building located at 1100 4th Street South, Great Falls, MT.

The mandatory factors listed below will be considered as well as a combination of Optional Factors.

Responses not in compliance with the RFP, RFP Amendments, and/ or Form 470, incomplete responses, and/ or responses received after the allowable contract date may be deemed non-compliant with this RFP and at the district’s discretion may be accepted or rejected.

The district reserves the right to waive any formalities without cause and without explanation to any bidders. As Erate Program rules allow, the district reserves the right to solicit bids if one or no bids are received during the bidding window.

The district reserves the right to award on an item-by-item basis, or as whole to the best advantage of the district, to the responsive and responsible vendor in accordance with the specifications set forth in this request for quote.

The following evaluation criteria will be used to evaluate bids:

Weighted Factors:

The contract will be awarded based on best-value to the district and its constituent districts, as well as evaluation criteria set forth in this document. Weighted factors contributing to the award are included in the following breakdown:

Weighted Factor Breakdown:

Mandatory Factors:	Points Available
Price of the eligible products and services	30
Positive Prior experience with service provider	10-20
Ability to Meet Requirements of RFP	10-20
Terms & Conditions including flexible invoicing	10-20
Optional Factors:	
Contingent on E-Rate Funding	5-20
Clear and Complete Bid	5-20
Risk for the District	5-20
Scalable Solution	5-20
Service Reliability	5-20
Ability to meet district’s services start date	5-20
Compatibility with existing systems	5-20
References	5-20

Points awarded for Cost of Services will not be subjective but will be based on a fixed formula. The formula for awarding points for the factor of cost will be:

Lowest priced service

provider = LPV Each

Responding service

provider = RV

Each Service provider's Cost of Services points awarded = 30 * LPV / RV

Therefore, the lowest priced service provider will be awarded 30 points for the Cost of Services factor. All other service providers will be awarded points based on their proximity in price to the lowest priced service provider. Example: A service provider with a bid twice as expensive as the lowest priced service provider will mathematically receive 15 points.

References

The service provider should provide a minimum of three (3) client references, preferably located in Montana. References shall include successful implementation(s) of a similar scale and complex venue.