

**Great Falls Public School Districts 1 and A a.k.a. Great Falls Public Schools**

1100 4th Street South

Great Falls, MT 59405

Funding Year (FY) 2025-2026 E-rate RFP for Data transmission services or Wide Area Networks (WAN)

SLD Billed Entity Number: 134857

Applicant Form 470 Identifier: Great Falls Public School Districts 1 and A a.k.a. Great Falls Public  
Schools\_ 2025 \_ Cat 1 \_ Form 470 C, Replacement 470

**Contact Information**

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## **Overview**

Great Falls Public School Districts 1 and A a.k.a. Great Falls Public Schools (hereafter collectively referred to as, “district”) seeks Request for Proposals (RFP) for Data transmission services or Wide Area Networks (WAN) according to the definition of the 2025 Eligible Services List and/ or the Glossary of Terms on the USAC website.

The objective of this RFP is to accomplish a fair, open, and competitive procurement. The RFP is accessible electronically at [www.usac.org](http://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 [njirwj@midrivers.com](mailto:njirwj@midrivers.com) and requesting a copy of the RFP and related documents.

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

The District is not entertaining site visits.

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 Telecommunications data transport services/ Wide Area Network (WAN) services. Telecommunications data transport services/ Wide Area Network (WAN) services and 1+/-static IP address, if applicable, is required to be delivered to each of the locations as listed on the RFP attachment titled, “Building Locations and Addresses.”

Bids may be accepted for delivery of Telecommunications data transport services/ Wide Area Network (WAN) services by any E-rate eligible technology means available to meet the requested specifications. Bids should specify the technology used to deliver services (i.e., Ethernet, wireless microwave, satellite, etc.).

Seeking bids with incremental pricing options of 10 Gbps, 20 Gbps, and 50 Gbps download speeds or as close as feasible.

Preference may be given for bids that can offer some “future proofing” with scalable bandwidths up to 100 Gbps upload/ download speeds and/ or the option to upgrade during term of the agreement without an extension of contract.

According to USAC guidance and FCC established E-Rate program rules, “The FCC Form 470 and RFP should provide enough information to request comprehensive proposals with line-item cost details from service providers, but not so much information that the applicant states a preference for a particular connectivity solution, a particular construction route, or particular method of construction.”

Furthermore, “the FCC adopted a technology-neutral competitive bidding standard for self-provisioned networks – service provided over third-party networks.

If an applicant specifies a requested bandwidth that other providers can provide, the technology-neutral competitive bidding standard expands the competitive bidding pool.”

Stating a preference to a specific topology can influence the choice of connectivity solutions, can impact the physical layout of the network, and can suggest different methods for network construction.

Stating a preference to a specific topology can also violate the FCC’s “technology-neutral competitive bidding standards.”

Therefore, to maintain eligibility for the requested services in the E-Rate program, the District will refrain from answering any questions regarding a preference to the WAN topology. The District is looking for service provider recommendations. If uncertain, then please make a recommendation or bid all options.

Bids should specify the technology used to deliver services (i.e., Ethernet, wireless microwave, satellite, etc.).

#### *Service Level Agreement*

Service providers should state in writing how they will ensure Telecommunications data transport services/ Wide Area Network (WAN)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 a.m. and 7:00 p.m.

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

In addition, the service provider (Telecommunications data transport services/ Wide Area Network (WAN)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.

The service providers should specify required demarcation setup included in base fees, e.g. wall mounted CPE, Cat 6 or 6a, or SFP+ modules as a handoff, rack mount patch panel, etc. Service providers should assume that the current handoff is not sufficient to handle the proposed solution. Service providers should follow the guidance in the Networking or Modulating Equipment section of this RFP on how to bid networking or modulating equipment, connectors, other components, software, or licensing required for a fully functioning turnkey WAN solution or the USAC website. If there is a discrepancy in the methodology of how to bid networking or modulating equipment, the guidance of the USAC website will be the final decision. Each piece of equipment should be bid as a separate line item including make, model, and sku (if available) to determine eligibility.

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 7/1/2025 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.

#### *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 Telecommunications data transport service/ Wide Area Network (WAN). 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.

For clarity, the District is not accepting bids for terms of services longer than the requested terms of services. The District does not consider a 3-year agreement with the 2 1-year voluntary extensions to mean the same thing as a 5-year or 60-month term agreement and therefore cannot accept a bid for a 5-year agreement.

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.

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. Bids received in response to the first two Form 470s that meet the criteria of this Form 470 and associated RFP documents will be considered for evaluation. If a service provider wishes to resubmit a bid or submit new bids, the District will accept all bids that meets the criteria for requested services associated with this form 470 and RFP documents.

Bids may be emailed to Jeff Williams at [jeff\\_williams@gfps.k12.mt.us](mailto:jeff_williams@gfps.k12.mt.us) and Nicole Jones at [njirwj@midrivers.com](mailto:njirwj@midrivers.com).

Bids may also be mailed to the ATTN: Jeff Williams at the Great Falls Public School Districts 1 & A a.k.a. Great Falls Public Schools 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.

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**

As this is the 3<sup>rd</sup> time an RFP and Form 470 has been posted requesting bids for this type of services, the District will include all previous RFP documents including the previous questions and answers. Responding service providers may request clarifications regarding specifications outlined in this RFP within the first 14 days after certification of Form 470. After the first 14 days, the District will enter into a quiet period for the remainder of the bidding period.

Clarifying questions should be emailed to Nicole Jones at [njirwj@midrivers.com](mailto: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 may be deemed a cardinal rule change, 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, 2025, 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 School Districts 1 and A a.k.a. Great Falls Public Schools' 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. 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 E-rate 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:

<b>Mandatory Factors:</b>	<b>Points Available</b>
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
 <b>Optional Factors:</b>	
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
Price of ineligible products and services	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.