



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT) MANAGED SERVICES FOR THE NORTHEAST GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION

Sealed submissions responsive to this Request for Proposals, plainly marked "RFP for IT Services NEGRC" on the outside of the mailing envelope, addressed to the NEGRC, Attn: Julie Ball, NEGRC Executive Assistant, 305 Research Drive, Athens, GA 30605-2795 will be accepted until 4:30 p.m. EST on September 20, 2021.

The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (hereafter "NEGRC") is requesting proposals from qualified information-technology (IT) firms specializing in comprehensive managed services. The NEGRC prefers firms with familiarity with a governmental environment; however, will consider a company or companies that can supply specific needs in the requested IT areas. Such providers should be able to provide responsive, high-quality services that are specific to the criteria listed or have the ability to show strengths in all criteria.

The NEGRC seeks to maintain the current IT infrastructure, enhance the current IT infrastructure, promote resiliency, and ensure a maximum return on its technology-related investments.

This Request for Proposals may be obtained by visiting the latest news section of the NEGRC website at negrc.org. Addenda to this request, if any, including written answers to questions, will be posted on the NEGRC website. Any questions may be directed to: Amber Bailey, NEGRC Admin/HR Support Specialist, at frontdesk@negrc.org or (706)369-5650 on M-F from 8:30am-5:00pm. EST.

The NEGRC reserves the right to reject any or all submissions, to waive technical or legal deficiencies, to proceed or not with any proposal or process, and to negotiate such terms and conditions of any proposal, agreement, lease or other contract that may be in the best interest of the NEGRC.

The NEGRC reserves the right to terminate or amend this process at any time.

A. Summary of the NEGRC's Objectives

The NEGRC invites qualified Information Technology (IT) Services Providers to assist with IT-related functions that are to include, **Server Management, Network Maintenance & Monitoring, on-site support, Hardware Maintenance & Upkeep, Cyber Security, and Network Architecture and Design.**

The NEGRC currently uses a hybrid in house/outsourced approach to implement these services. Working knowledge and/or experience with Regional Commissions, county, or municipal operations is preferred. The NEGRC currently uses a variety of applications to support its operations, including but not limited to: GMS Accounting and Financial Management Reporting System, Microsoft Office suite, Cisco Any Connect, DAS Data System (DDS), Adobe Creative Suite, and ArcGIS Pro. The NEGRC is interested in exploring options for cloud-based storage and collaboration tools.

The current firm providing managed services to the NEGRC supplies one on-call personnel to respond to daily network and user needs, in addition to off-site 24/7 monitoring and patching.

The preferred vendor will provide comprehensive support and expertise needed to ensure the NEGRC's IT systems enable organizational operations on a daily basis, as well as providing overall guidance for network enhancements and future growth. Proven diagnosis and assessment capabilities, expert technical skills, availability, and strong customer service are required.

Regular communication, collaboration and coordination with the NEGRC is critical to the success of the chosen vendor. Preferred vendors must be able to illustrate experience working in dynamic, high-paced environments, including strategies used to ensure work is properly coordinated and deployed.

Proposals will be evaluated on all qualification criteria, including cost.

B. Background Information

The NEGRC provides aging, workforce, and planning and economic/community development services to the 12 counties and 54 municipalities in Northeast Georgia.

The NEGRC depends upon a technology infrastructure that is linked between two buildings, all connected via the NEGRC's own network. The NEGRC also owns and operates several point-to-point wireless connections.

The NEGRC implements a hybrid in-house/outsourced approach to management and development of its information technology resources.

Information technology services are provided at a single location (within two, detached buildings) at 305 Research Drive, Athens, GA, and include essential functions that require service during regular hours of operation, Monday-Friday, 8:30am – 5:00pm. Support for (some) NEGRC staff working remotely may also be required during those same hours.

Currently, each division has at least one staff IT point-person that fulfills limited technology-related support needs.

Current remote, contracted personnel that fulfill technology/equipment-related support needs include:

- Two on-call consultants that maintain the organization's website (<https://negrc.org>)
- Telephone system vendor
- Copier/printer vendor

The NEGRC has historically relied upon a single vendor to provide day-to-day operational and long-term development support for the bulk of its IT needs. With the ongoing technology changes the NEGRC is open to working with more vendors who can specialize in one area even if they do not have Regional Commission/local government knowledge.

Current IT set up is vendor-supplied on-call IT support personnel who are dedicated to IT services, with in-person and remote help desk and network monitoring and maintenance provided during regular business hours.

The NEGRC seeks a firm that has the technical expertise, breadth of experience, and availability to support its information technology needs in a regional organization, and provide advice to guide its critical infrastructure, security, and software decisions into the future.

C. Scope of Work

The scope of services is intended to ensure proper operation of the NEGRC's networked computer system, equipment, and related network infrastructure. It is anticipated to include, but not be limited to the following:

1. ENDPOINT AND PRINTER MANAGEMENT

The NEGRC maintains over 50 Desktops, Laptops, and Tablets. The NEGRC requires the following for endpoints:

- Asset Tracking
- Patching and compliance for Operating Systems and Installed Applications
- Mobile Device Management

- Endpoint Encryption
- AntiVirus & AntiMalware management and remediation
- Security Policy Management
- Remote Monitoring of hardware and software for errors, warnings, or non-compliance
- Troubleshoot printer/scanning issues; interface with vendors to coordinate repairs

2. SERVER MANAGEMENT

The NEGRC currently hosts two physical servers, located in two separate server rooms. The NEGRC's website is hosted and managed by an offsite, contracted firm.

The ideal provider will have at least two senior level, long-term, employees holding certifications in one or more of the following: Microsoft Server, Microsoft Endpoint, or VMware vCenter.

- Warranty Management
- Asset Tracking
- Patching and compliance for Operating Systems and Installed Applications
- Endpoint Encryption for offsite servers
- AntiVirus & AntiMalware management and remediation
- Security Policy Management
- Remote Monitoring of hardware and software for errors, warnings, or non-compliance
- Weekly backup audits provided to each respective Division Director
- Offsite backup storage & Disaster Recovery of NEGRC's data and applications
- Management of NEGRC's Servers

3. NETWORK MAINTENANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The NEGRC has a local network that serves its two office buildings. The NEGRC also finds itself relying more heavily on wireless technologies as time goes on. This network and wireless technology is mission-critical and needs to be monitored 24/7/365. Support with a maximum 3 Hour SLA during regular business hours (8:30am – 5:00pm) is required for all network related outages. Providers should have at least two senior level, employees holding certifications in one or more of the following: Cisco CCNA Routing & Switching, Cisco CCNA Wireless, or CWNA.

The scope of work includes, but is not limited to:

- Inventory Control & Reporting
- Warranty Management
- Asset Tracking

- Patching and compliance for Operating Systems, appliance upgrades and all network equipment including firewalls, switching, routing and wireless infrastructure
- Security Policy Management
- Remote Monitoring of hardware for errors, warnings, or non-compliance
- Monthly change control reporting
- Monthly reporting on configuration backup

4. HELPDESK SUPPORT AND ON-SITE SUPPORT

The NEGRC supports approximately 40 End Users, who use approximately 25 applications.

The vendor is expected to provide responsive, on-call support in administering to the NEGRC's IT needs. This includes end user support and training, department level systems and capital needs planning, and input into major system enhancements. Vendor will participate collaboratively with various departments to fulfill service needs, and will make recommendations for future purchasing and technology upgrades when advisable. Personnel providing services under this contract resulting from the RFP must be fully qualified to perform the required work. A designated engineer is preferred.

Helpdesk Support Remote must include:

- Service Call Tracking
- Monthly reports on problems, issues, affected users, problem categories
- Application & operating system helpdesk services
- Guidance and user support pertaining to proper use of NEGRC applications and systems
- Guidance and user support pertaining to proper response to security concerns such as websites, emails, and application behavior
- Construction of a knowledge base of Support Resolutions and Instructional How-To articles. The platform housing this data, and the data within the platform shall be owned by the NEGRC.
- Support during Business Hours: Support during business hours must include on-call on-site support as well as phone or remote support as needed to meet the requirements below. Business Hours are Monday-Friday from 8:30am until 5:00pm. NEGRC Holidays are excluded.
 - At least 1 on-call support person, available to respond to service calls or outages in a timely manner
 - On-call support staff available to assist in user training and orientation on the first day of any newly hired NEGRC Employee
 - On-call support to trouble shoot basic network issues with the use of the NEGRC's remote system

- On-call support should have a good understanding of all the Internet connections and providers
- On-call support to rollout new computers/laptops
- On-call support for reviewing cyber security logs
- On-call support for reviewing current IT Management systems (Switches, Network, Wi-fi)
- On-call support should understand basic knowledge of the NEGRC's Vlan structure
- On-call support staff will report to the NEGRC's Administrative Support Specialist when onsite for directional information.

5. CYBER SECURITY

The NEGRC has deployed a robust, multilayered approach to security-focused technologies: DNS Security and content filtering, Anti-Malware software deployed to all Endpoints, Next-Gen Antivirus & Security software deployed to Servers, Standard Antivirus software deployed to Endpoints and end user training via a Learning Management System (LMS). The NEGRC would like to ensure that end-user Cyber Security training is distributed to end-users at least once a year.

- Monitoring & Management of the existing DNS Security and content filtering system.
- Monitoring & Management of the existing Anti-Malware System.
- Monitoring & Management of the existing Next-Gen Antivirus and Security system.
- Provide standard Antivirus software to, and manage said software on all endpoint devices.
- Provide a Learning Management System for NEGRC's employees, curate the trainings provided to end users.

6. VENDOR MANAGEMENT

The NEGRC hosts various vendor software applications that require at least one dedicated resource to become proficient in supporting the application's internal operations (application subject matter experts). The NEGRC also works with a number of vendors providing services to the NEGRC that fall under the scope of IT Management. The successful firm will be required:

- To work with vendors in jointly resolving issues or problems with vendor-supplied software, and to schedule updates and upgrades to provided services
- Monitor vendor-provided services and proactively reach out to vendors when and if those services stop working

7. NETWORK ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN

The NEGRC's network architecture (components, technologies, etc.) and design (layout and organization) must evolve to meet several larger objectives and long term goals in our varied environment(s). Several selected NEGRC staff will work closely with the selected vendor to discuss, design, develop, and implement various improvements in regards to network topologies, hosting, services, security, redundancy, and disaster recovery (DR). This measure is in response to the requirements for continuity of operations for critical government operation during various types of disaster events.

- These include natural disasters, technological, biological, nuclear, or other situations where the NEGRC needs to function days, weeks, or months in a state where one or more facilities are off-line or disconnected from the main network.
- Help design and plan for new technologies, network upgrades, and evolving security standards, and assist current NEGRC IT resources implement evolutions to the current network up to an architecture that supports more redundancy and overall less dependence on any one physical location.
- Plan for strategic improvements regarding hosting, services, data storage, security, and the DR issues discussed above.
- Help plan testing of DR operations on a regular schedule.

D. Submittal Content Requirements

Proposers should address each component of the scope of work, indicating how they meet the minimum standards set forth therein, and demonstrating how their personnel, experience, and expertise can best fulfill the NEGRC's specific needs.

The NEGRC will take into consideration the aforementioned requirements for each topic, and the NEGRC's desire to move from reactive support model.

Submittal requirements are intended to enable the NEGRC to make an objective comparison of each proposal, and to select a partner or partners that best meets the NEGRC's stated objectives.

The selected partner or partners will be expected to execute a services agreement with the NEGRC following selection.

1. COVER LETTER

The cover letter is the proposer's official letter transmitting the complete proposal to the NEGRC. The cover letter must include:

- the full name and address of the proposer's organization(s);
- the state of incorporation or in which it is licensed to operate; and

- the form of business, and the name and contact information for your organization or team for this proposal.
- A concise statement indicating whether the proposer is prepared to supply all services set forth in the Scope of Work or only some. State clearly which sections of the Scope of Work are included in your proposal with reference to the numbering above.

If the proposer consists of a team or joint venture, an authorized representative of each of the participating organizations is required to sign the letter. Respondents must include a chart or diagram explaining the intended form and structure of any proposed partnership or joint venture.

2. COMPANY PROFILE

Please provide detailed information regarding the proposer's company, including:

- organizational structure
- number and tenure of all employees, including key staff that will fulfill services contained in this proposal
- a list of personnel certifications (including those held by key staff)
- a list of the number of full-time personnel qualified to support each element of the scope of services (e.g. cybersecurity, 1 FTE)
- total number of current clients
- total number of current municipal clients
- a list of three current references (including contact information) with similar networks.
- financial information – the NEGRC may elect after reviewing proposals to ask for financial information, to be submitted confidentially, from vendors to ensure financial resources and stability prior to further consideration.

3. PROJECT NARRATIVE

Provide a detailed narrative description of your approach to each component of the Scope of Work. Information to be provided should include experience with the task, quality and experience of specific personnel proposed to fulfill each respective function (include resumes), project management skills and quality control strategies, and estimated cost/range of cost options, by task.

The NEGRC seeks IT support services that are responsive, reliable, proactive, and forward-looking, while maximizing cost effectiveness.

4. COST OF SERVICES

The NEGRC anticipates entering into a monthly, service-cost agreement, with a minimum term of one year. The NEGRC will also consider a multiple-year term if advantageous to the NEGRC. Please provide a total monthly fee and associated

breakdown by task. For the Help Desk/On Site Support Scope, please break down your proposed fee for each element separately (e.g. on-site support should be a stand-alone item).

While the NEGRC requests this contract be all inclusive, it recognizes that there may be instances where services may exceed those considered in a basic monthly scope of work. Please provide your firm's opinion on what types of services might fall into this category, and provide appropriate pricing – examples could include: site visits outside of prescheduled visits; after hours, emergency response visits; additional discounts for multi-year agreements; other special circumstances.

Cost proposals shall be submitted in a separate, sealed envelope labeled "Cost Proposal".

E. Submittal Process

Two (2) hard copies and 1 electronic copy (on a thumb drive) of the proposal must be delivered to the address indicated in the invitation by **4:30 p.m. EST on September 20, 2021**. Late proposals will not be accepted. Proposers are encouraged to avoid the use of synthetic report covers and partitions. The Cost Proposal shall be submitted in a separate sealed envelope, clearly marked, with the proposal.

F. Selection Process

Proposals will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- Responsiveness to submission requirements
- Comparable managed services experience
- Strength of entity members/completeness of the team
- Senior Level Engineering or Support staff retention rates
- Demonstrated ability to assist in the role of information technology integrator
- Demonstrated ability to work with multiple, diverse departments
- Understanding the goals and direction set forth by the IT manager as expressed in the Scope of Work and through the interview process
- Staffing capacity
- The extent to which the overall proposal meets or is likely to meet the NEGRC's objectives, as outlined in Scope of Work.

The NEGRC may select one or more entities to interview; the selected firms will be expected to introduce senior engineering and support staff, present the proposal and respond to questions. Interviews will be factor in the overall qualitative

evaluation of Proposals. In addition, the NEGRC reserves the right to make a site visit to the proposer's place-of-business as part of its interview process.

Based upon all of the evaluation criteria and interview, the NEGRC will select the highest ranking firm or firms and attempt to negotiate final proposals/scopes of work and contracts.

If the NEGRC is unable to reach agreement with its preferred firm(s), the NEGRC may enter into negotiations with that firm(s) whose proposal was deemed to be next highest ranking and most advantageous to the NEGRC.

G. Additional Information

All requests for additional information and/or questions should be directed, in writing, to Amber Bailey, NEGRC Admin/HR Support Specialist, at frontdesk@negrc.org no later than September 13, 2021 at 4:30p.m. EST. All requests will be reviewed on a weekly basis as a whole and answers will be posted to NEGRC website at the end of each business week. Requests to schedule a site visit should be directed to the contact listed above.

H. Reservation of Rights

The NEGRC reserves the right to undertake such investigation as it deems necessary to evaluate the proposers and to evaluate its submittal.

The NEGRC reserves the right to request additional information as part of this selection process.

The NEGRC also reserves the right to reject any or all submissions, to waive technical or legal deficiencies, to proceed or not with any proposal or process, and to negotiate such terms and conditions of any proposal, including cost, or contract that may be in the best interest of the NEGRC. The NEGRC shall not be responsible for any costs incurred in the preparation of a proposal or other related activities. The NEGRC reserves the right to terminate or amend this process at any time.