

Midwestern Higher Education Compact
Virtualization & Data Center Modernization
MHEC-RFP-03092020
Request for Proposals – Vendor Questions and Answers
April 7, 2020

Vendor A
<p>Q1. Will you consider e-mail submission in case mail stops/limits delivery?</p> <p>A1. Yes, see RFP Addendum 1 notice dated March 31, 2020. https://www.mhec.org/news/rfp-virtualization-data-center-modernization-rfp-03092020</p> <p>Q2. Are you offering any extension given the COVID-19 Pandemic and a shift in business operations and priorities?</p> <p>A2. Yes, see RFP Addendum 1 notice dated March 31, 2020. https://www.mhec.org/news/rfp-virtualization-data-center-modernization-rfp-03092020</p> <p>Q3. What time will answer to the questions be answered? We are concerned with 5-day turnaround between questions answered and submission.</p> <p>A3. See RFP Addendum 1 notice dated March 31, 2020. https://www.mhec.org/news/rfp-virtualization-data-center-modernization-rfp-03092020</p> <p>Q4. What is the perceived potential revenue value of the contract?</p> <p>A4. Aggregate sales across MHEC's Technology Contracts for FY 2019 exceeded \$460 million dollars with year-over-year growth of greater than ten percent. Note: Past sales are not indicative or a guarantee of future sales volumes.</p>
Vendor B
<p>Q5. Is the intention to award multiple vendors or is the goal to award a sole source solution?</p> <p>A5. MHEC is seeking a contract with one or more technology providers for various products and services to provide a range of options to entities in the MHEC region and nationally.</p> <p>Q6. Can responders provide partial solutions or is a full proposal required?</p> <p>A6. Alternative and partial solutions can be provided, if accompanied by an explanation of how the solutions offered are within scope as referenced in Section B.</p> <p>Q7. Is the purpose of the RFP to provide complete hardware, software, and services solutions or should the focus be software based?</p> <p>A7. Yes, the proposed solution should identify what hardware, software, and services are included in the offering. Plus, any hardware, software, or services not offered that may be necessary to implement the proposed solution.</p>

Q8. Does MHEC aim for the responders of this RFP to be OEMs directly with resellers eventually added as subsets?

A8. There should be evidence of an agreement between certified supplier and an OEM manufacturer to offer pricing and support for the proposed products and services.

Q9. Based on the Country's current environment, many of the vendors responding to this RFP may be involved in emergency situations with Education entities. Additionally, it's currently unknown if travel or gatherings for a Respondent's Conference in April will be viable. Because of these unprecedented current events, may an extension of this RFP be considered?

A9. Yes, see RFP Addendum 1 notice dated March 31, 2020. <https://www.mhec.org/news/rfp-virtualization-data-center-modernization-rfp-03092020>

Q10. The RFP mentions the current VMware/Arrow relationship which is software only. What vehicle is currently in place for hardware and services?

A10. The current VMware/Arrow contract offers all VMware's products, services, training, and cloud services. Professional technical services are allowable and performed by authorized resellers. MHEC maintains hardware contracts with Dell, HP Enterprise, HP Inc., Lenovo and Oracle.

Vendor C

Q11. In light of the current Covid-19 situation, would it be acceptable to email our response to MHEC in lieu of hard copies? Also, does MHEC anticipate making alternate arrangements for the in-person Respondent's Conference, scheduled April 29-31 (e.g. virtual participation or rescheduling)?

A11. Yes, see RFP Addendum 1 notice dated March 31, 2020. <https://www.mhec.org/news/rfp-virtualization-data-center-modernization-rfp-03092020>

Q12. Is it possible to receive an extension?

A12. Yes, see RFP Addendum 1 notice dated March 31, 2020. <https://www.mhec.org/news/rfp-virtualization-data-center-modernization-rfp-03092020>

Q13. Does the MHEC organization intend to use this contract to replace existing MHEC technology catalog contracts over time?

A13. MHEC intends to rebid the virtualization offering, evaluate alternatives and solutions that complement the virtualization offering.

Q14. Will this contract replace Computing Hardware, Network, Wireless, Voice, and Wavelength Division Multiplexing Hardware and Related Services contract?

A14. No, MHEC has a list of anticipated solicitations to replace contracts coming to the end of their term, including Computing Hardware, Network, Wireless, Voice, and Wavelength Division Multiplexing Hardware and Related Services. <https://www.mhec.org/resources/technology-solicitations>

Q15. Is MHEC looking to see specific solutions in the response, if so can sizing and scenarios be provided?

A15. MHEC is looking to enter into a master agreement with one or more vendors to provide virtualization solutions. Individual institutions will then have the ability to utilize the master contract to procure from the products and services awarded. It is unknown at this time what specific solutions each individual institution will be seeking. It is dependent upon each institution's preference.

Q16. For ITaaS, is there any amount of growth expected over time, Y/Y annually or 5-year projections in terms of compute/storage?

A16. Yes, MHEC is anticipating growth in the ITaaS offerings and usage by entities over time both on-premise and off-premise.

Vendor D

Q17. Does MHEC intend to combine services and products on one contract?

A17. Yes.

Vendor E

Q18. Is the offeror expected to provide server hardware purchase offerings or is a solution that it entirely comprised of the combination of on premises software and cloud services a solution that will be considered? It is our assumption we are providing a procurement mechanism to rapidly provision infrastructure services running either on customer hardware or in public cloud. Please clarify the hardware expectations.

A18. Correct, the intent is to provide a procurement mechanism to rapidly provision infrastructure services running either on institutions hardware or in public cloud. The expectation is to identify hardware needs and options for the customer to implement the proposed solution.

Q19. Is it expected the solution allows a member institution to leverage their existing VMware based virtualization solutions? Alternatively, can migration solutions be offered to move existing workloads to another virtualization stack?

A19. Yes, both options are desirable.

Q20. What type of maintenance is referred to in section B.2? IS the maintenance of VM instances including OS patching expected to be in the scope of the services provided by the offeror? Is the maintenance of customers applications expected to be in the scope of the services provided by the offeror?

A20. A maintenance offering to support the proposed solution, which may include maintenance negotiated by the institution to support applications.

Q21. In section B.2, does “security” imply the service offerings provide an expectation of secure infrastructure and tools to monitor the security of workloads running on of the platform? Does this requirement also imply the offeror provide security monitoring services including proactive security investigation and reactive security incident management?

A21. Yes, security is implied as part of the product and service offering. Institutions may negotiate additional security services including monitoring, investigation, and incident management.

Q22. In section B.6, can examples of financing scenarios be provided?

A22. Yes.

Q23. In section B.11, does having an AWS APN partner accreditation satisfy the OEM requirement?

A23. There should be evidence of an agreement between certified supplier and OEM manufacturer to offer pricing and support for the proposed products and services.

Q24. Cloud pricing changes periodically and typically trend downward over time. We recommend not copying prices into a static document, rather link to the latest cloud pricing for relevant services. Will this satisfy the requirement?

A24. Pricing is a component of the proposal evaluation. How pricing is updated, is negotiable.

Vendor F

Q25. We charge project work by the hour. For our product catalog, should we list our services solutions with the estimated number of hours for that specific solution? We can also include our range of hourly rates that we charge.

A25. Yes, estimated number of hours and hourly rate card charged by skill type (e.g. project manager, engineer, architect, etc.).

Q26. How many current VMware users do you have? We are trying to understand the size and scope of this project. This is relevant to our next question.

A26. MHEC is looking to enter into a master agreement with one or more vendors to provide virtualization solutions. Individual institutions will then have the ability to utilize the master contract to procure from the products and services awarded. It is unknown at this time which or how many individual institutions will utilize the master agreement. Each institution will decide on its own if and how to use the master agreement.

Q27. Is end-user help desk support needed? We have a limited capacity for help-desk support, so depending on the user-pool size, we need to plan accordingly.

A27. Unknown. MHEC is looking to enter into a master agreement with one or more vendors to provide virtualization solutions. Individual institutions will then have the ability to utilize the master contract to procure from the products and services awarded. It is unknown at this time which or how

many individual institutions will utilize the master agreement. It is dependent on institutions' preference.

Q28. We can speak to many of the IT services being requested but only pertaining to AWS. We don't work with Azure or GCP, and we don't do much work with on-premise.

A28. Okay.

Q29. Can you please elaborate on the go-to-market strategy on Section B.6?

A29. The question is designed to elicit how you would deal with this opportunity from contract launch and throughout the sales cycle.

Q30. Would we be responsible for hardware/equipment purchases? We work with hardware providers, but we don't sell any hardware directly. If we are responsible, can we put our preferred hardware providers in the subcontractors Section B.14?

A30. No, unless you provide evidence of an agreement between certified supplier and OEM manufacturer to offer pricing and support for the proposed products and services. Hardware/equipment purchases are off contract and dependent on institution preference.

Q31. Lastly, do you have a specific format/form for the proposal? Or should I just respond to items B1-B17 in Word document?

A31. Please follow guidance provided in Section A.11. Responses must be keyed to the section and paragraph numbers provided.

Vendor G

Q32. When your RFP asks for 3 references do they have to be Academic? All of our references are Fortune 500 and Federal Government clients.

A32. Please see B.17 "List other related references if higher education references are not available. The Offeror shall indicate how long the Offeror has had a contractual relationship with the client and the types of products and services provided to the client."

Vendor H

Q33. What existing storage vendor(s) do you have in house?

A33. Unknown. MHEC is looking to enter into a master agreement with one or more vendors to provide virtualization solutions. Individual institutions will then have the ability to utilize the master contract to procure from the products and services awarded. It is unknown at this time how individual institutions will utilize the master agreement. It is dependent on institutions' preference.

Q34. Would you be open to learning more about other storage vendors if they meet or exceed your needs (cost and expectation wise)?

A34. Yes.

Q35. When it comes to storage solutions do you have any requirements when it comes to; capacity, performance? If so, what are the requirements?

A35. Unknown. MHEC is looking to enter into a master agreement with one or more vendors to provide virtualization solutions. Individual institutions will then have the ability to utilize the master contract to procure from the products and services awarded. It is unknown at this time how individual institutions will utilize the master agreement. It is dependent on institutions' preference.

Q36. In regard to storage, do you require any advanced functionalities such as; dedupe, compression, encryption, mirroring, replication, data tiering and virtualization?

A36. Unknown. MHEC is looking to enter into a master agreement with one or more vendors to provide virtualization solutions. Individual institutions will then have the ability to utilize the master contract to procure from the products and services awarded. It is unknown at this time how individual institutions will utilize the master agreement. It is dependent on institutions' preference.

Q37. What current backup tools are you using?

A37. Unknown. MHEC is looking to enter into a master agreement with one or more vendors to provide virtualization solutions. Individual institutions will then have the ability to utilize the master contract to procure from the products and services awarded. It is unknown at this time how individual institutions will utilize the master agreement. It is dependent on institutions' preference.

Q38. Do you require additional information on remote backup and recovery?

A38. Yes, as it pertains to the proposed solution.

Q39. Do you have a current or future need to integrate cloud as a storage tier?

A39. Unknown. MHEC is looking to enter into a master agreement with one or more vendors to provide virtualization solutions. Individual institutions will then have the ability to utilize the master contract to procure from the products and services awarded. It is unknown at this time how individual institutions will utilize the master agreement. It is dependent on institutions' preference.

Q40. What is the forecasted growth of the storage environment over the next 18 months? 3 Years?

A40. All of MHEC's technology contracts have increased usage in the Midwestern region and nationally in the other compact regions.

Q41. Is the majority of your storage block or file?

A41. Unknown. MHEC is looking to enter into a master agreement with one or more vendors to provide virtualization solutions. Individual institutions will then have the ability to utilize the master contract to procure from the products and services awarded. It is unknown at this time how individual institutions will utilize the master agreement. It is dependent on institutions' preference.

Q42. Are there any specific Business Partners you work with?

A42. No.

Vendor I

Q43. Will MHEC accept references from subcontractors' customers or from the respondent's subsidiary company's customers?

A43. Yes.

Q44. In the RFP overview, MHEC writes "Currently, MHEC maintains a full catalog of VMware's products and services..." Is MHEC looking to recompile this contract for VMware products only, or are other/additional virtualization and data center modernization products under consideration as well?

A44. MHEC is seeking proposals for VMware, equivalent virtualization solutions, and other solutions that complement the virtualization environment.

Q45. If MHEC would like to receive proposals for additional virtualization and data center modernization technologies beyond VMware, should offerors provide a single proposal to include all technology catalogs, or can offerors provide more than one proposal to include additional technologies?

A45. For evaluation, the preference would be that responses are separated for Section B. by vendor or line of business.

Q46. If additional technologies are welcome, will MHEC consider extending the proposal submission deadline by 30 days?

A46. Yes, see RFP Addendum 1 notice dated March 31, 2020, see <https://www.mhec.org/news/rfp-virtualization-data-center-modernization-rfp-03092020>

Q47. In light of the current coronavirus restrictions, will MHEC please consider extending the proposal submission deadline by 30 days?

A47. Yes, see RFP Addendum 1 notice dated March 31, 2020. <https://www.mhec.org/news/rfp-virtualization-data-center-modernization-rfp-03092020>

Q48. In light of the current coronavirus restrictions on shipping of non-essential packages, would MHEC please consider allowing proposal submissions to be made electronically, rather than shipping hard copies?

A48. Yes, see RFP Addendum 1 notice dated March 31, 2020. <https://www.mhec.org/news/rfp-virtualization-data-center-modernization-rfp-03092020>.

Q49. Can MHEC please confirm if identifying the offeror's authorized signatory and providing the corresponding signature within the proposal's cover letter would comply with RFP Section A.18? If not, could MHEC please provide details as to who the authorized signatory should sign the proposal?

A49. Yes, a cover letter will comply with Section A.18. The signatory authority is a person that has been authorized in writing to act as an agent responsible and authorized to submit the proposal on behalf of the offeror.

Q50. Per the Evaluation Criteria, "Innovation" will count for 20% of the offeror's response. Can MHEC please provide additional detail as to how this factor will be evaluated?

A50. MHEC seeks proposals with new ideas on the packaging and presentation of virtualization products, the services offered, licensing, order writing and fulfillment, which will benefit at least a significant portion of the wide variety of potential eligible organizations present in the MHEC region, as well as nationally. Innovation can conceivably range from marketing, pricing structure, channel promotion, and the range of services provided.

Vendor J

Q51. Are voice/telephony services in scope for services offered?

A51. Voice and telephony services would be considered as part of the proposed solution.

Q52. Can we get clarification on the "accredited OEM partner" requirements?

A52. Provide evidence of an agreement between certified supplier and OEM manufacturer to offer pricing and support for the proposed products and services.

Q53. Is End-User support/Help Desk in scope for services offered?

A53. Yes.

Q54. Is the decommission and retirement/removal of legacy IT hardware in scope for the services offered? If so, is there an expectation of purchasing of legacy hardware from the Compact participants?

A54. Unknown. MHEC is looking to enter into a master agreement with one or more vendors to provide virtualization solutions. Individual institutions will then have the ability to utilize the master contract to procure from the products and services awarded. It is unknown at this time how individual institutions will utilize the master agreement. It is dependent on institutions' preference.

Q55. What is the required level of granularity for the chargeback reporting? (Time and depth)

A.55. Section C.26 details the Quarterly Reports format.

Q56. How often is the chargeback reporting required to be delivered?

A56. Section C.26 states “Quarterly Reports and Contract Administration Fees shall be submitted by end of the preceding month after the end of March, June, September, and December of each calendar year.”

Q57. What does the billing structure look like? (is it difference for each member of the compact?)

A57. The negotiated master agreement will define the transaction and fulfillment of the order. Individual institutions may have additional requirements.

Q58. Are these contracts going to be scoped to get to an end-state or keep moving to adjust to any changes?

A58. The contract’s intent, as stated in the scope of the RFP, is to be agile and to keep moving to adjust to market demands.

Q59. Is MHEC interested or open to hybrid or multi-cloud approach to infrastructure virtualization and modernization?

A59. Yes.

Q60. Does MHEC utilize or have relationships with Public Cloud vendors (i.e. AWS, Azure, Google, etc.)? Are there Public Cloud providers that will not be considered?

A60. No MHEC does not have a direct relationship. All public cloud providers are being considered.

Q61. Does MHEC have existing enterprise agreements in place with any Public Cloud providers today which may or may not impact our ability to negotiate terms or pricing with those providers?

A61. No, MHEC does not have a direct relationship. Institutions may have direct relationships with public cloud providers.

Q62. Can you describe in greater detail training needs, as mentioned in the RFP? Is the selected vendor expected to train staff at multiple member organizations on the operation of the solutions or will a sufficient, industry-standard set of documentation and runbooks be sufficient?

A62. Yes, training will be dependent on each institution’s needs.

Q63. Is MHEC interested in exploring native cloud or PaaS solutions such as AWS’ Lambda or Directory Services?

A63. Yes.

Q64. Describe the level of technical integration between member institutes today? For instance, is each institution standalone or are there shared services across institutions (i.e. Active Directory, Shared Databases, etc.)?

A64. Unknown. MHEC is looking to enter into a master agreement with one or more vendors to provide virtualization solutions. Individual institutions will then have the ability to utilize the master contract to procure from the products and services awarded. It is unknown at this time how individual institutions will utilize the master agreement. It is dependent on institutions' preference.

Q65. Will work with member institutions be handled separately or will work and projects be aggregated through MHEC? For instance, will awardee provide separate SOW's for work contemplated by each member organization or will there be another work request process in place?

A65. Work independently and directly with institution.

Q66. Can you further describe MHEC's requirements around Section B.15? Is small/disadvantage business status a component of the selection process? If so, are there revenue targets or other criteria respondents should consider?

A66. It is encouraged to consider small/disadvantage business status. Goals and revenue targets vary by state and institution.

Q67. Can you detail greater the expectations for ownership and responsibility as it pertains to Section C.21? Would MHEC assume responsibility for the creation and delivery of said seminars, printed materials, website development, so forth with the assistance of the Successful Offeror? Or is the offeror expected to own and deliver these outright?

A67. MHEC is willing to work with vendors on cooperative marketing opportunities, however this requires some evidence of forethought. The question is designed to elicit the creativity of the offeror if given the opportunity.