

Midwestern Higher Education Compact

IT Security Services MHEC-RFP-14OCT2020

Request for Proposals – Vendor Questions and Answers

October 27, 2020

Vendor A

1. Have MHEC member states agreed to use the resultant contract for these services?
Answer: No, nor have eligible institutions.
2. Have MHEC member states provided any government estimates for the services and products that they might purchase under the resultant contract?
Answer: No.
3. Have MHEC member states provided a forecast of specific products and services they might purchase under the resultant contract?
Answer: No.
4. Do you have an estimate for the level of effort and cost to the vendors to market their services through this contract to the MHEC member states?
Answer: No.
5. What marketing assistance does MHEC plan on providing to the vendors who are awarded a contract?
Answer: MHEC will work with contractors to develop an appropriate rollout and marketing plan for the contract/solution.
6. Can you clarify what type of responses you anticipate receiving for the following line items from pages 19-20 of the solicitation?
 - Response to Section A: Instructions
 - Response to Section B: The Midwestern Higher Education Compact and its Eligible Institutions/Organizations
 - Response to Section D: Proposal Requirements
 - Response to Section E: Proposal Evaluation
 - Response to Section F: Contractual Requirements*Answer: Responses should be appropriate for each section. Some sections may simply require acknowledgement, others may require considerable detail.*
7. Given that no resumes are requested and, we provide services rather than products, are we still required to provide copies of certifications related to the services we provide since these certifications are at the labor resource level?
Answer: If a requirement does not apply to the solution being proposed, simply so state and provide explanation.

Vendor B

1. RFP Overview 5 Scope Is this solicitation to recompile a current contract?
Answer: No, there is no incumbent.
2. RFP Overview 5 Scope Is MHEC looking for specific technology brands in each or any of the 5 categories?
Answer: No.
3. RFP Definitions (A.2) 6 Definitions Vendor: is MHEC open to responses from distributors?
Answer: Yes.
4. RFP Definitions (A.2) 6 Definitions Contractor: can distributors authorize and partner with resellers and Value Added Resellers to sell and perform services under the contract?
Answer: Yes
5. RFP Pricing (C.4) 15 Project based pricing flat fee Can MHEC please explain what they understand project-based pricing (flat fee) to mean? And provide examples if possible.
Answer: The purpose of section C.4 is to demonstrate a variety of pricing options that may be proposed based on the specific solution being offered. It is not intended to be restrictive or to proscribe a specific pricing model.
6. RFP Proposal Preparation and Submission (D.1) 18 General Does MHEC have a specific size/length preference for responses?
Answer: No, however brevity and clarity are encouraged.
7. RFP Proposal Timeline (A.10) 8 Proposals Due Respectfully, we would like to request an extension of 30 days as this solicitation will require a significant amount of technical writeup from our manufacturers and subcontractors.
Answer: See Section D.4 Submission Requirements.

Vendor C

1. Is this a new contract or a re-bid of an earlier contract? If it's a re-bid
 - How many projects were conducted through the previous contract?
 - What is the total dollar value of the projects conducted through the previous contract?
 - Please provide a list of the types of projects (i.e. the nature of the work) conducted through the previous contract?*Answer: This is a new solicitation, there is no incumbent.*
2. Does MHEC have a list of upcoming projects/desired initiatives anticipated through this contract that it can share with bidders?
 - Does MHEC have a limit on how many firms it will pre-approve within each of the five categories of service in Section C.1 on pages 12 - 13 of the RFP?

- If yes, what is MHEC’s cap in terms of the number of firms it will include in its pool of pre-qualified firms?
Answer: No.

- 3. When an MHEC entity has a project need, will it contact all of the firms on this contract (within the applicable category in Section C.1 on pages 12 - 13 of the RFP) and provide them with an opportunity to submit a proposal? If no, what selection process will be used when project needs arise?
Answer: Each eligible institution will determine their own selection process as projects arise.

- 4. Regarding Section C.6 (Accessibility) of the RFP: If we are bidding on Category 5 (Security Consulting Services), do we need to complete and return a VPAT?
Answer: If a requirement does not apply to the solution being proposed, simply so state and provide explanation.

- 5. Section D.4 (Submission Requirements) requests “Three (3) sealed bound originals” (as well as an electronic copy). Are you seeking:
 - Three copies with each having an original, wet signature? Or,
 - One copy with an original, wet signature, plus two photocopies of that original copy?*Answer: Either is acceptable.*

Vendor D

1. Are you willing to share a list of all vendors who have expressed an interest in this project?
Answer: No.

2. Is this the first time that MHEC has pursued an information security offering of this type?
Answer: Yes.

3. Is there an incumbent and are they eligible to bid on the current project?
Answer: There is no incumbent.

4. Please provide utilization reports detailing the MHEC administrative fees collected on projects generated under the previous contract for the listed incumbents.
Answer: There is no previous contract.

5. We appreciate our clients’ generosity in providing references for our firm and we do not wish to overwhelm our clients with reference requests. We are glad to provide a detailed list of customer references for similar projects (RFP p. 18, §D.2.2.b) upon being named a finalist for the project. Is this acceptable?
Answer: Anonymized references are acceptable in the initial proposal. Upon request by MHEC at a later stage of the process, it would be expected that the detailed information be made available promptly.

Vendor E

1. Can you provide the number of employees that would be potentially taking the security training? Do you happen to have that data broken down by institution?

Answer: No.

Vendor F

1. Our pricing for most of the solutions varies - is it acceptable to include a tiered pricing table?

Answer: Yes.

2. I also want to confirm that the pricing should be completely separate from the rest of the proposal. Do the licensing, ordering documents and additional materials get submitted the the main proposal or with the pricing?

Answer: See D.2.5. Licensing, ordering documents and additional materials can be submitted with the main proposal

Vendor G

1. Will you please clarify if manufacturers are to respond or if this is open to resellers as well?

Answer: It is open to both.

2. Does MHEC, or it's Eligible Organizations, align with a particular security framework, e.g., NIST CSF, ISO 27001?

Answer: No.

3. Are technical security consulting services requested, e.g., penetration testing, red and purple teaming?

Answer: Any consulting services that fit within the broad definition stated in C.1.5 would be considered.

4. Will you please clarify the pricing model that should be used in regard to travel, as pages 13 and 30 (section F.18, 3.Travel, b.) seem to conflict. It would be most helpful to provide example of "travel expenses not covered by an on-site rate".

Answer: See page 19, D.2.5.b. Note: Page 13 addresses how travel costs will be calculated "For the purposes of evaluating this RFP", while Page 30 is standardized contract language that is desired but not mandatory.

5. If the on-site rates are to be inclusive of travel costs, this will make the admin fee payable inclusive of travel as well?

Answer: In that scenario, yes.

Vendor H

1. Is it the intent of the MHEC organization to award multiple vendors to each section or one vendor per section?

Answer: Please review section C.1. "MHEC's intent is to competitively solicit one or more solution vendors for IT Security Services addressing the landscape described below (C.2) for one or more of the following security areas. Proposals may be submitted in as few or as many categories as desired, however proposals should clearly indicate the specific area (as defined in this section) being responded to. Each category will be evaluated and scored individually." There may or may not be multiple vendor awards per section.

2. In section B.3 point 2. States there are three regional interstate compacts in the United States: if awarded is the intent to extend the contract to these members?

Answer: The other compacts may "also be designated as eligible organizations for participation in contracts resulting from this RFP."

Vendor I

1. Is there any incumbent working on this contract? If yes, can we get the incumbent name & pricing?

Answer: There is no incumbent.

2. What is the estimated budget for the RFP?

Answer: There is no estimated budget.

3. What is the spending on last Contract which MHEC had?

Answer: There is no prior contract.

4. If we are interested in bidding on multiple categories, do you want us to provide one combined proposal?

Answer: Please review section C.1. "... Proposals may be submitted in as few or as many categories as desired, however proposals should clearly indicate the specific area (as defined in this section) being responded to. Each category will be evaluated and scored individually." This requirement does not preclude the offering of additional considerations if multiple categories are awarded.

5. Will MHEC consider extending the due date of the RFP?

Answer: See Section D.4 Submission Requirements.

6. Can MHEC change the mode of submission from hardcopy to email considering the current pandemic situation?

Answer: See Section D.4 Submission Requirements.

Vendor J

1. Section C.1.2 SIEM: Is tiered pricing acceptable?

Answer: Yes.

2. Section C.1.5 Consulting: Is MHEC asking for staff augmentation such as a, Chief Security Officer or GRC consultant, for these services?
3. Section C.1.5 Consulting: Is MHEC asking for a GRC consultant to be on retainer to provide these services?
4. Section C.1.5 Consulting: Is MHEC asking for project-based consulting?

Answer for 2-4: Any consulting services that fit within the broad definition stated in C.1.5 would be considered.

5. Is MHEC essentially looking for a listing of services that our organization can perform and an associated rate card that will be the “max” hourly rate that can be charged for each role identified to support services?

Answer: That would be an acceptable approach.

6. If a project is to include multiple years do you want us to provide add on option year pricing as well?

Answer: Any such additional information would be appreciated.

7. How much detail do you wish to have regarding the types of services; without specific scopes of work it is not feasible to provide specific bids on specific projects?

Answer: Provide the amount of detail needed to provide clarity on the type of services being offered, understanding that there is no specific scope of work involved.

8. Will an organization that is awarded a “Master” contract through the RFP can expect that individual “work assignments” will be issued for specific projects?

9. Will MHEC or MHEC members issue “work assignments”? Who will judge responses to specific work assignments?

10. Will “work assignments” be a specific scope of work request for any projects assigned to them so that a detailed Statement of Work and cost proposal can be provided?

Answer for 8-10: Please review Section B. The ‘master’ contract will be between MHEC and the contractor. Eligible institutions will contact contractor regarding specific projects to obtain a cost proposal and a detailed scope of work, and then issue a purchase order or other appropriate documentation per their institutional requirements for the specific solution.

11. Are payments for Work Assignments going to be based on T&M, deliverables/milestones, or both? Will awarded vendors be required to utilize their proposed hourly rate cards when responding to deliverables/milestone (non-T&M) Work Assignments, or will awarded vendors be allowed to offer fixed pricing (independent of their rate cards) on a case-by-case basis for deliverables/milestone (non-T&M) Work Assignments?

Answer: Payment requirements will depend on the specific work being performed. Pricing can be negotiated on a case-by-case basis.

Vendor K

1. How many endpoints can be expected in each MHEC constituent's environment? Is there an average, or an expected range?

Answer: MHEC cannot provide this information.

2. Is there a minimum size (FTE count) that is expected across MHEC's constituents?

Answer: MHEC cannot provide this information.

3. How long must the proposed pricing be valid for?

Answer: Due to the different types of solutions possible, the length of time pricing may be valid may vary.

4. Section D.2.2.b; References: Due to the confidential nature of our security business as well as existing NDAs, we would like to provide anonymized references at this RFP stage, i.e., we would provide project implementation details, but the client would be described, not named, and specific contact information would be withheld for now. Reference calls would be coordinated upon request at down-select. Would this approach be acceptable to MHEC for this RFP response?

Answer: Anonymized references are acceptable in the initial proposal. Upon request by MHEC at a later stage of the process, it would be expected that the detailed information be made available promptly.

5. Section D.4 Submission Requirements: Due to restrictions surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic and for our mutual health and safety, would it permissible to submit our proposal via email instead of hard copy printing and shipping? Would an electronic signature be acceptable?

Answer: See Section D.4 Submission Requirements.

Vendor L

1. Does the MHEC utilize a SIEM? If so, can you provide the number of the security devices and other log sources to be monitored per the categories listed below? Just need the Device Quantity for each. Note: Attached excel spreadsheet is an easy to use calculator and if this excel can be filled in with requested device count that would be great.

Answer: MHEC will NOT be purchasing a vendor(s) proposed solution. Please review Section B of the RFP.

2. Is there currently an incumbent company or previous incumbent, who completed similar contract performing these services? If so - can you please provide incumbent contract number, dollar value and period of performance?

Answer: There is no incumbent.