**East Central BOCES**

**Request for Proposal**



**Consortium Firewalls**

**Release date: *February12th, 2025***

**All Responses are Due *March 13th, 2025***

**---For details see Response Due Date Section---**

**Abstract:**

The East Central BOCES is seeking bids for a contract to procure firewall solutions. This RFP invites qualified vendors to submit proposals for high-performance, secure firewalls that meet established industry standards and the technical requirements of our consortia members. Under this contract, individual consortia members will have the option to purchase approved firewall products that ensure robust network protection, compliance with relevant security guidelines, and reliable performance. Proposals should detail product specifications, pricing, support services, and any industry certifications or compliance standards met by the offered solutions.

The successful vendor or vendors will be awarded a contract to provide the products and services as described in this RFP for *a period of three (3) years* (subject to annual appropriations as provided in the Contract), with voluntary extension option(s) to renew for two (2) additional one year periods, exercisable at East Central BOCES’ or Recipient of Services discretion.

**Introduction:**

The East Central BOCES Central Office is located at 820 Second Street in Limon, CO, which is the principal administrative office location.

The East Central BOCES provides direct services to 20 member school districts as part of our ongoing services and strives to provide leadership to the broader K-12 Colorado School District community. This procurement seeks bids for a contract to procure firewall solutions—including hardware firewalls, associated services, and support—that are directly purchasable by our consortia members. Under this RFP, qualified vendors are invited to submit proposals for products and services that meet robust security standards and integrate seamlessly with existing network infrastructures.

Notably, our consortia members are eligible e-rate entities, and the majority intend to leverage their available Category 2 e-rate funds for these purchases. Accordingly, proposals should address not only the technical and support requirements but also ensure compliance with applicable e-rate program guidelines and eligibility criteria. All vendors must have a current and active Service Provider Identification Number (SPIN) on file with the Universal Service Administration Company (USAC).

**Scope of Services:**

1. Overview of Services: The East Central BOCES is seeking proposals for a comprehensive firewall solution contract that includes hardware, firewall services, and ongoing support. The solutions must adhere to industry best practices and vendor‐neutral guidelines, such as those detailed in NIST Special Publication 800-41 and ISO/IEC 27033, ensuring robust network security and compliance.

Key requirements include:

* **Stateful Traffic Inspection & IPSec Throughput:**Vendors must provide firewall solutions capable of high-performance stateful traffic inspection. Proposals should include detailed technical specifications for four distinct throughput capacity levels. For each level, the vendor must clearly indicate on the pricing sheet the specific model’s IPSec throughput performance, as measured under stateful inspection conditions.
* **Four Throughput Capacity Levels:**Responses should be structured to address four predefined performance tiers. For each tier, bidders must specify the corresponding model’s throughput capabilities. This will facilitate a standardized comparison across models and ensure that the proposed solutions meet varied network performance needs.
* **Industry Standards & Compliance:**The proposed solutions must align with recognized security frameworks, incorporating guidelines from NIST SP 800-41 and ISO/IEC 27033. Vendors should detail how their products support these standards and ensure compliance with current network security best practices.
* **Scalability, Integration, and Support:**Proposals should also address the scalability of the firewall solutions, their ability to integrate with existing network infrastructures, and the scope of support services provided (including warranty, technical support, and software updates). This information is critical for our consortia members, most of whom are eligible e-rate entities planning to leverage Category 2 e-rate funds for their purchases.

By meeting these detailed requirements, vendors will help ensure that our consortia members have access to firewall solutions that not only provide robust security but also deliver the performance and flexibility needed to support current and future network demands.

1. Detailed Requirements: See Attachment B
	1. The vendor must complete and submit Attachment B with the proposal as an Excel Document.
2. Implementation Information: Respondents are required to provide detailed information and pricing for two distinct implementation options for the proposed firewall solutions:
	1. **Member-Managed Deployment with Technical Assistance:**
	* **Overview:** This option is designed for consortia members who prefer to independently deploy and configure their new firewall solution while having access to vendor-provided technical assistance as needed.
	* **Requirements:**
		+ Describe the scope of technical assistance available during the deployment, including remote support, documentation, and guidance resources.
		+ Outline procedures for addressing specific technical queries or challenges during installation and configuration.
		+ Specify any support escalation procedures and expected response times for resolving issues during the deployment process.
	1. **Comprehensive Professional Services Deployment:**
	* **Overview:** This option involves a vendor-led implementation where professional services are provided to review the member’s current firewall solution and configure the new system in collaboration with the client. The professional services engagement is intended to be conducted remotely working with Recipieant of Services on-site personnel for hands-on activities.
	* **Requirements:**
		+ Provide a detailed description of the professional services offered, including an on-site review of the existing firewall setup, system configuration, integration support, and any additional consulting services.
		+ Outline the process, timelines, and deliverables associated with the professional services implementation, including pre-deployment assessments and post-deployment validation.
		+ Include information on the qualifications and experience of the personnel who will be involved in the deployment, as well as any post-implementation support or training available.

Each proposal must clearly delineate the scope, deliverables, and cost structures for both options, enabling consortia members to select the approach that best aligns with their internal capabilities and requirements.

1. TRAINING: The Recipient of Services expects a comprehensive training component with this project.
2. DISENGAGEMENT PLAN - The vendor shall provide an outline of a Disengagement Plan that highlights how all activities and billings are handled at the end of an engagement, should the Recipient of Services opt to move to a different system. Vendors are to provide an outline of this plan in their RFP response. A plan acceptable to the Recipient must be finalized and accepted by the Recipient no later than 90 days after the award of the contract. This plan must address the exported data formatting, normalization, and schema so that it may be readily transferred to another system.
3. Partial submissions - Vendors are encouraged to apply even if they cannot address all required features at the time of implementation or within the required budget amounts. Vendors must provide a “deliverable-by-date” for any missing “must” requirements. Refer to Proposal Instructions, Section D for “must” vs. “should” definition.

**Proposal Instructions for Services please include the following information in your response:**

Simple, brief, and direct proposals are encouraged.

Use PDF format for the narrative and Excel for all spreadsheets.

Use 12 pt font and 1-inch margins. Diagrams and maps are exempted from this restriction.

All proposals are to be submitted electronically

Refer to Proposal Submission for details below.

1. COVER PAGE: Complete Attachment A and use it as the Cover Sheet for the Proposal. Signed by an officer of the Company or someone authorized by the company to make binding commitments. Be sure to include your company name in the subject line and in the name of documents when responding to ensure that it is distinguishable from other responses.
2. OVERVIEW OF VENDOR FIRM: Provide a brief description of the vendor’s organization and services. Include specific information concerning staff that would be assigned to work on this project, with their professional qualifications and related experience. The vendor shall provide information documenting that it can adequately staff and manage the installation of this project and meet the project schedule. Specify how many end users you currently support in your multi-tenant architecture/model.
3. NARRATIVE: Proposal narrative describing the services and design—not to exceed 5 pages.
4. FUNCTIONALITY: Refer to Attachment B for all functionality requirements and fill in the required information. Additional detail can be provided or referenced within the Attachment B column “Description” where requested or appropriate.

	1. The requirements document is categorized with a must/should statement. The distinction for “must” vs. “should” is instructive as to the importance of the feature to this procurement.

		1. Must - The proposal must address this functionality or service. The East Central BOCES has determined this requirement to be critical to the success of the prevailing bidder’s solution. If a requirement with a “must” designation is not scheduled to be available by the implementation deadline, the vendor should fill in the “Date of Availability” column. The “Date of Availability” for specific features shall be binding and will be memorialized in the resulting contracts. Discounting will be applied to invoices for missed deadlines for feature availability. Proposals responding with no to “must” requirements shall be scored accordingly.
		2. Should - If available, vendors should provide the function or service described with a should designation. The fulfillment of “should” functionality will be scored, but at a lower overall weight as compared to “must” requirements.
5. BACKGROUND: Refer to Company Background and Vendor Information include the following at a minimum:
	1. Years in Business
	2. Location of Offices
	3. Form of Business (corporations, partnership, joint venture, LLC, etc.)
	4. Size (number of employees, and non-proprietary annual financial summaries)
	5. Current Client base
6. REFERENCES: Provide 3 references from current customers. Preferably from Colorado-based Public Entities.
7. ACCESSIBILITY: All services and products must be accessible to individuals with disabilities and adhere to all State of Colorado and Federal laws.
8. PRICING: Provide the total cost as detailed below. To be considered all pricing information must be presented by filling out an Attachment C spreadsheet:
	1. Non-recurring (NRC) or one-time charges related to implementation, software setup, testing, training, and other specific professional services.
		1. If the solution provides options for purchase that are not easily communicated within the structure of the Attachment C sheet, the vendor should provide additional duplicated sheets inside of the workbook. Vendors should seek to simplify their solution options where feasible.
	2. Annual Recurring charges (ARC)
		1. If the solution provides options for purchase that are not easily communicated within the structure of the Attachment C sheet, the vendor should provide additional duplicated sheets inside of the workbook. Vendors should seek to simplify their solution options where feasible.

Include with this section of your proposal a Milestone Payment Plan that the Vendor will use to invoice the Recipient of Services. This plan would establish a schedule of progress payments based upon the completion of work tasks. Prior to any payment, the Vendor shall submit invoices in compliance with the payment plan, in form and substance acceptable to the Recipient with all of the necessary supporting documentation. Such invoices shall be submitted for completed services only. The payment of any invoice by the Recipient shall not prejudice the Recipient’s right to object to the invoice or matter in relation thereto. Such payment by the Recipient shall neither be construed as acceptance of any part of the work or service provided nor as an approval of any of the amounts invoiced therein.

It is understood that there will be some disparity in how vendors present their individual cost breakdowns. However, to simplify our ability to make direct comparisons, please adhere to these guidelines set forth in this section and complete an appropriate Attachment C spreadsheet. A significant deviation in a response from this section may result in bid disqualification. Any such disqualification will be considered final and shall be at the sole discretion of the RFP Review Committee.

**General Items**

1. **Value-added services** Respondents must disclose any additional costs as well as any required equipment specifications for value-added services.
2. **Hybrid Response** A combination of vendors may respond with a proposal to meet the requirements set forth in this RFP. When providing a hybrid response, the vendor consortium must clearly identify the entity that will be responsible for each deliverable. The hybrid response must clearly indicate in the bid the proposed contract structure including the entity responsible for associated technical support services.
3. **Data Privacy and Data Security** Vendors should provide their policy on Privacy and Data Security. The East Central BOCES will require a Data Privacy Addendum to be executed in concert with the contract resulting from this RFP. The terms of this addendum will address the usage and destruction of Personally Identifiable Information. Offers are encouraged to provide information regarding current security practices regarding PII in their solution(s).
4. **Contract Terms** A resulting contract will be for no less than 36 months beginning on the first day of the next appropriation period. Recipients under this RFP and the resulting master contract must be able to execute a purchase under the contract for 36 months from the date of the master contract execution. Contracts must include options for a minimum of two (2) voluntary additional 12-month terms for services. The use of these extensions shall be at the sole discretion of the East Central BOCES or Recipient of Services.
5. **Implementation Dates** Respondents are required to specify a maximal timeframe for the full implementation of the proposed firewall solution(s), measured from the date a consortia member places an order. This timeframe should encompass the entire process—including installation, testing, and achieving full operational status. If your solution involves multiple phases (e.g., configuration, data migration, or site-specific adjustments), please detail the timeline for each phase, including any dependencies or potential factors that could affect the schedule.

All timeline details must be clearly documented in your bid to ensure that the implementation schedule is realistic, achievable, and aligned with the operational needs of our consortia members.

1. **Schedule of Activities**RFP Released February 12, 2025
Last day to submit questions March 5, 2025 12:00 PM
All responses to questions posted March 7, 2025 4:00 PM
RFP Proposal Due—Electronic submission by 4 pm March 13, 2025 4:00 PM
Individual Vendor Meetings with Finalists March 17, 2025

Recommendation for Award Announcement March 18, 2025

1. **Questions** Vendors/contractors may submit questions to this procurement’s email address listed below. All questions must be received by the date and time listed in Section 6 - “Last day to submit questions.” Questions and all answers will be posted publicly on the East Central BOCES website by the date listed in Section 6. Direct all questions in writing to firewall-rfp@ecboces.org
2. **Proposal Submission** Proposals must be submitted in electronic form. All proposals are due on the date and time listed in Section 6, Schedule of Activities. No late proposals will be accepted. It is the responsibility of the offeror to ensure that East Central BOCES receives the proposal on or before the proposal due date and time. Late submissions will not be opened. The proposal package shall be delivered electronically to firewall-rfp@ecboces.org.
3. **Confidential / Proprietary Information** A vendor may request that specific portions of their bid be considered confidential. The following process will be used by the BOCES to assess the validity of the request.
	1. A written request must be included with the vendor’s bid proposal for a portion of the proposal to be considered confidential or proprietary. The vendor must provide a written justification and state the specific portion of the proposal which they wish to remain confidential
	2. The portion of the bid which the vendor desires to remain confidential must be clearly marked as such when the bid is submitted. The confidential section of the bid must be provided in a separate document from other bid materials, and cannot exceed more than a single document. If confidential information is commingled with other bid documents, the document in its entirety shall not be considered confidential.
	3. The BOCES evaluation committee will review the written confidentiality requests for their apparent validity and make a final determination. Note, neither the bid submission in its entirety or the proposal pricing information may be considered for confidentiality. However, no public release of information will be permitted prior to a successful contract execution under this RFP.
4. **Confidential Information - Colorado Open Records Requests** - The Vendor understands that all material provided or produced under this Agreement may be subject to the Colorado Open Records Act, § 24‐72‐201, et seq., C.R.S. (2006) and that in the event of a request to the BOCES for disclosure of such information, the BOCES shall advise the Vendor of such request in order to give the Vendor the opportunity to object to the disclosure of any of its proprietary or confidential material. In the event of the filing of a lawsuit to compel such disclosure, the BOCES will tender all such material to the court for judicial determination of the issue of disclosure and the Vendor agrees to intervene in such lawsuit to protect and assert its claims of privilege and against disclosure of such material or waive the same. The Vendor further agrees to defend, indemnify and save and hold harmless the BOCES, its officers, agents, and employees, from any claims, damages, expenses, losses, or costs arising out of the Vendor’s intervention to protect and assert its claim of privilege against disclosure under this Article including, but not limited to, prompt reimbursement to the BOCES of all reasonable attorney fees, costs, and damages that the BOCES may incur directly or may be ordered to pay by such court.
5. **Non-Discrimination** The vendor will comply with all applicable state and federal laws, rules, and regulations involving non-discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation, or gender.
6. **Independent Contractor Clause** All personal service contracts must contain the following clause: "THE CONTRACTOR SHALL PERFORM ITS DUTIES HEREUNDER AS AN INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR AND NOT AS AN EMPLOYEE. NEITHER THE CONTRACTOR NOR ANY AGENT OR EMPLOYEE OF THE CONTRACTOR SHALL BE DEEMED TO BE AN AGENT OR EMPLOYEE OF EAST CENTRAL BOCES. CONTRACTOR SHALL PAY WHEN DUE ALL REQUIRED EMPLOYMENT TAXES AND INCOME TAX WITHHOLDING, SHALL PROVIDE AND KEEP IN FORCE WORKER'S COMPENSATION (AND SHOW PROOF OF SUCH INSURANCE) AND UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION INSURANCE IN THE AMOUNTS REQUIRED BY LAW, AND SHALL BE SOLELY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ACTS OF THE CONTRACTOR, ITS EMPLOYEES, AND AGENTS."
7. **Indemnification** To the full extent permitted by law, the vendor/contractor shall indemnify, save and hold harmless East Central BOCES, its employees and agents, against any and all claims, damages, liability, and court awards including cost, expenses, and attorney fees incurred as a result of any act or omission by the vendor/contractor or its employees, agents, subcontractors, or assignees pursuant to the terms of the contract resulting from this RFP.
8. **Venue** The laws of the State of Colorado, USA shall govern the bidding, formation, performance, and legal enforcement of any resulting contract. Venue for any dispute concerning the RFP or resulting contract shall be exclusively in a federal court located in Colorado or the state court/district located in Lincoln County.
9. **Insurance Requirements** The vendor selected for contracts award shall furnish a certificate of liability insurance (and certification of insurance for each of its subcontractors and partners) for an amount of no less than $1 million per occurrence. The vendor shall be responsible for all worker’s compensation, automotive liability, and personal injury insurances and any claims that may arise from the project. East Central BOCES also may require a labor and material payment bond and performance bond for construction elements of the project.
10. **Contractual Obligations** Local, State, and Federal Compliance Requirements: The successful vendor shall be familiar and comply with all local, state, and federal directives, ordinances, rules, orders, and laws applicable to, and affected by this contract including, but not limited to, Equal Employment Opportunity regulations, Occupational Safety and Health Act and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the Family Education Rights & Privacy Act.
11. **Selection of Proposals** An Evaluation Committee will review proposals and select a shortlist of respondents (scoring highest on the evaluation) as finalists. Proposals from this finalist group will be considered for further evaluation and to enter into discussions for best and final proposals before award, provided that a best and final proposal date is specified in the Schedule of Activities. If no “Best and Final” offer date is present in the Schedule of Activities, vendors should tailor their proposals with the understanding that their initial proposal price will be the sole information used when the committee considers the vendor’s pricing score.
12. **Evaluation Criteria** Pricing is the most highly weighted category in determining the successful offer in this RFP and should be a driving consideration for vendors when preparing responses. Other factors include; but are not limited to-- long-term aggregate pricing discounts, meeting RFP technical requirements, ability to address growth, local presence (i.e., point of contact), privacy and security practices, company stability, ability and background, and capability to respond quickly to any service concerns.
13. **Award of Contract** The highest-scoring proposal/proposals will be selected for award of the contract. These will be announced as a “Notice of Intent to Award”. All vendors will be informed of the award selection. In the event that the highest-scoring vendor for the project cannot contract for the required service for any reason, the offer may become available to the offeror of the second-ranking proposal. The East Central BOCES may alternatively, elect to cancel the RFP in whole or in part.
14. **Vendor Partners and Subcontracting** East Central BOCES encourages the participation of small, preferably locally-based companies in this procurement. All anticipated partnerships and subcontracting arrangements must be identified in the initial proposal. In the event of an award and subsequent contract, any changes to the proposed partnership or subcontracting plan, if applicable will require the approval of East Central BOCES and/or Recipient of Services. Significant changes in the partnership or subcontracting arrangements could result in the withdrawal of the award.
15. **Availability of Funds** The resulting contract is expected to span more than one appropriation period, therefore, a non-appropriation clause shall be in effect. This clause provides that should a contract be canceled for reasons of non-appropriation of funds, the cancellation would take effect on the last day of the appropriation period for which funding was budgeted and appropriated. The date would be June 30th of any year during which the contract is in effect. In the event of cancellation for non-appropriation of funds, the recipient of services will not be obligated to purchase any additional service or items from the contract holder. In the event of non-appropriation of funds, the successful vendor will be notified a minimum of ninety (90) days prior to the then-current appropriation period’s close.

A Colorado Constitutional Amendment prohibits public schools and libraries from entering into multiple-year financial obligations, such as multi-year contracts, without pre-allocation of the funds unless the local voters have previously approved such an obligation. [Colo. Const. Article X, Section 20 (4) (6)] However, funding agreements, including multi-year contracts that are subject to annual appropriations by a governing board such as a school, generally are allowed and are not subject to this constitutional provision since the governing board decides each year to make a particular expenditure.
16. **Right to Cancel** The East Central BOCES reserves, at its sole discretion, the right to cancel or withdraw from this RFP at any time prior to entering a signed agreement.

**Attachment A –Respondent Cover Sheet**

|  |
| --- |
| **Request for Proposal Cover Sheet** |
| **Date** | February 12, 2025 |
| **Proposal title** | East Central BOCES  |
| **Proposals will be received electronically until** | March 13, 2025 |
|  | 4:00 p.m., local time |
|  | firewall-rfp@ecboces.org |
|  |  |
| **Goods or services to be delivered to or performed at** | Various Colorado School Districts |
| **For additional information please contact the Project Manager** | firewall-rfp@ecboces.org |
|  **Phone** |  719-775-2342 |
| **Email Address** | firewall-rfp@ecboces.org |

If you require additional information, please submit questions to the email above.

The undersigned hereby affirms that (1) he/she is a duly authorized agent of the vendor, (2) he/she has read all terms and conditions and technical specifications which were made available in conjunction with this solicitation and fully understands and accept them unless specific variations have been expressly listed in his/her offer, (3) that the offer is being submitted on behalf of the vendor in accordance with any terms and conditions set forth in this document, and (4) that the vendor will accept any awards made to it as a result of the offer submitted herein for a minimum of ninety calendar days following the date of submission.

**PRINT OR TYPE YOUR INFORMATION**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Name of Company |  | Phone |  |
| Address |  | Zip |  |
| City/State |  | Phone |  |
| Contact Person |  | Title |  |
| Proposed Delivery Date |  | Email |  |
| Authorized Representative’s Signature |  | Title |  |
| Printed Name |  | Date |  |

 **Attachment B—Spreadsheet for Procurement Requirements. Complete the requested information and return in .xlsx or .xls format.**

**Use Attachment B Attachment spreadsheet**

**Attachment C - Spreadsheet for Procurement Pricing. Complete the requested information and return in .xlsx or .xls format.**

**Use Attachment C Attachment spreadsheet**