Request for Proposals

Professional consulting services
for
Information Technology support

Northwestern Water & Sewer District
12560 Middleton Pike
Bowling Green, OH 43402
www.nwwsd.org
September 1, 2016

Project
Northwestern Water & Sewer District solicits proposals from qualified, professional information technology vendors to provide ongoing support and maintenance for the District's existing IT infrastructure, along with advice and consultation in planning for future upgrades and expansion. The District maintains a small internal IT staff for administration and minor troubleshooting, but larger issues and most routine maintenance are the responsibility of the external IT support vendor. In order to budget for IT costs appropriately, we seek an annual support contract that covers support and maintenance for existing systems at a predictable cost. The contract period will begin January 1, 2017.

Background
Northwestern Water & Sewer District is a regional water and sewer district chartered under section 6119 of the Ohio Revised Code. Organized in 1994 to assume responsibility for the water distribution and sanitary sewer collection operations of the Wood County Sanitary Engineer, the District's mission is to provide reliable, high-quality water and sanitary sewer service to our customer base in townships and municipalities in and around Wood County, Ohio. By combining utility systems to share operation and maintenance costs, the District strives to provide professional management and experienced service personnel throughout our service area. This enables smaller townships and municipalities to comply with state and federal mandates in an efficient, economically viable manner. At present, the District serves approximately 19,000 business and residential customers with a staff of about 65 full-time employees. We operate over 430 miles of water distribution lines and roughly 350 miles of sanitary sewer collection lines. Annual revenue is a little over $20,000,000.

Existing Technical Environment
At the end of 2016, we anticipate that the District's IT infrastructure will include a VMware-based server environment hosted on 3 physical Cisco blade servers in a UCS chassis with a NexGen SAN and 2 Cisco core switches. The virtual environment currently supports 9 Windows-based servers and several non-Windows servers or appliances. There is one additional physical HP server running Windows.

　　　The network infrastructure on our main campus includes 10 Cisco switches, one Cisco firewall, 8 wireless access points, and a wireless controller. We maintain 5 remote sites with Cisco firewalls and miscellaneous additional equipment behind each firewall. We also maintain a Cisco switch and a Cisco router at a co-location facility with our primary internet service provider, Amplex Internet. Individual devices include 38 desktop PCs and 37 laptop PCs, most of them running Windows 7 with a few running Windows 8.1. We also have Apple and Android tablets deployed with our field crews; while these devices are not included in the support contract, knowledge of mobile connectivity for iOS and Android is important. A complete list of supported devices is available in the Appendix.

Our principal enterprise-level software systems include i-nHANCE Customer Information System (Harris Computing) for utility billing, Eden (Tyler Technologies) for financial management, Lucity for asset management and work order management, and ArcGIS (ESRI) for our geographic information system. In general, troubleshooting and correction of issues specific to these software packages are the responsibility of the specific software's vendor, but the general IT support vendor should be able to work effectively with these and other external vendors to identify and resolve issues.

The District also maintains a number of software systems for which the general IT support vendor would provide primary support. These systems include MS Exchange, MS Office, MS Project and Project Server, MS SQL Server, Cisco Cloud Web Security, Cisco Wireless LAN Controller, Symantec Endpoint Protection, GFI Mail Archiver, and GFI Mail Essentials.

The District also maintains an extensive SCADA telemetry system for monitoring and controlling industrial control systems at approximately 120 remote sites distributed throughout our service territory. At present, most of these sites report via radio, but we are actively converting them to TCP/IP reporting via public internet or private network through a number of providers including Amplex Internet, Verizon Wireless, Buckeye Telesystem, and WATCH TV. The chosen vendor should be able to provide assistance and support in managing and maintaining connectivity and security between the District's network and these external networks.

The District has an established vendor relationship for cloud-based disaster recovery and data retention using a Veeam-based backup solution. The successful vendor will be able to work with the existing DR vendor to maintain functionality and reliability of the Veeam solution.

Scope of Work:
The District seeks to establish an ongoing partnership with an external IT support vendor to provide support in the following areas:
1. Day-to-day troubleshooting of hardware and software issues on the District's servers, PCs, and network. This support should extend to peripheral devices such as monitors, keyboards, mice, UPS units, printers, desktop scanners, etc.
2. 24x7 monitoring of key systems with automated failure notification
3. 24x7 help desk coverage for key systems with 1-hour reply time and 4-hour target response time (or better)
4. 8x5 coverage for laptops and PCs with 1-hour reply time and 24-hour target response time (or better)
5. Timely repair of failures or malfunctions on all systems, including malware infections, intrusion detection, and other security breaches
6. Timely assistance with changes and reconfigurations on all systems, including implementation of security best practices
7. Timely assistance interacting with external software or hardware vendors to install, configure, troubleshoot, or repair systems
8. Logging and reporting of requests for assistance, ideally including an online support ticket portal

9. Comprehensive patch management for covered equipment, including OS patches and application patches. Servers, SANs, firewalls, and other key components to be patched quarterly; laptops to be patched semi-annually; desktop PCs and switches to be patched annually.
10. Regular maintenance for servers, PCs, firewalls, switches, and other network equipment, including regular review of system logs to identify security and maintenance issues
11. Regularly scheduled on-site presence by support engineers (currently 8 hours per week)
12. Spare parts stocking of key hardware components related to the server & network infrastructure (see the Appendix for the list of equipment covered by stocked spares)
13. Deployment of replacement PCs and laptops, including installation of OS updates, application software, and network and peripheral device configuration (we maintain a 5-year replacement schedule for desktop workstations, and a 4-year replacement schedule for laptops)
14. Assistance with developing specifications for new equipment and software or identifying appropriate hardware or software solutions, including preparing quotes for purchase
15. Record-keeping related to hardware purchases and warranties purchased through the support vendor
16. Record-keeping and administration for maintenance and support contracts and license management for server and network-related software, including timely notification of pending contract renewals (this applies only to software and systems primarily purchased or administered through the support vendor)
17. Development and maintenance of administrative documentation for systems and applications
18. Input and advice on implementation of new capabilities and systems, including cloud-based options
19. Input and advice on security best practices
20. Input and advice on preparation of annual IT plans and budgets, including budgetary estimates for specific recommendations and proposals

RFP submittals and requested information
Respondents should contact Gavin Smith (see the contact information below) to request a copy of the Appendix, which provides the detailed listing of covered equipment. Submittals should include the following information:

1. *Client relationship approach* – provide a general statement of the firm's approach to IT support, with particular emphasis on distinguishing characteristics or services. Discuss procedures for responding to immediate support needs, as well as mechanisms for long-term planning and collaboration. Include information related to internal documentation of client information and security procedures for safeguarding that information.

2. *Qualifications* – include a profile of the firm's qualifications for performing the work. Areas of interest here include breadth of expertise and depth of staff, with particular emphasis on certifications, numbers of engineers, and physical locations of technical support personnel. Please also describe the process for continuing education and certification renewal for engineers and other staff. The proposal should address the firm's ability to support the following specific categories of software and hardware:
   a. VMware and other software and services related to the virtual computing environment
   b. Microsoft products – Including PC and server OS, SQL Server, Exchange, Office products, and MS cloud services
   c. Cisco products – including hardware such as switches, routers, and firewalls; as well as software such as Cisco Cloud Web Security, Cisco Wireless LAN Controller, and Cisco AnyConnect VPN and web security
   d. Symantec Endpoint Protection
   e. GFI Mail Archiver and GFI Mail Essentials
   f. HP servers, workstations, and notebooks
   g. Cisco blade servers and UCS chassis
   h. NexGen storage arrays
   i. iOS mobile devices
   j. Android mobile devices
3. *Security* – Describe your company's expertise with network and device security. Describe your strategy for securing your clients' data. Include your company's policies as well as any security certifications that the company or staff possess.
4. *Methods and strategic plan* – describe the plan and methods for carrying out the scope of work.
5. *Detailed description of support services* – include a detailed breakdown of the terms of the proposed support package, including service levels, days and hours of coverage, remote monitoring and troubleshooting capabilities, response times, call logging and reporting resources, etc. The support plan description should also be clear about what is not covered.
6. *Description of fees and costs* – provide an annual contract price for the requested support services. The District is open to multi-year proposals for reduced annual costs.
7. *Description of process for adding/removing covered devices* – provide a description of the process for amending the contract to include additional hardware or software systems, and for removing retired systems.
8. *References* – contact information for customers who can speak to the quality of the firm's work on similar support contracts. Preferably, some of the referenced work will be in the public sector.
9. *Additional information* – any additional information the consultant deems relevant.

Evaluation Factors:
Proposals will be evaluated on a variety of factors, with the rough ranking of importance as follows:
1. Ability to meet requested service levels
2. Client relationship approach
3. Company experience, certifications, expertise, vendor relationships, staffing, and recommendations
4. Cost

Schedule:
The deadline for receipt of proposals is October 7, 2016 at 5:00 PM. We hope to finish the review process and reach a decision on a vendor or vendors by early November. As part of the review process, we may invite some respondents to visit the District office for additional discussions and interviews. Please direct your submittal (email is fine) to:

> Gavin Smith
> GIS/IT Administrator
> 12560 Middleton Pike
> Bowling Green, OH 43402
> 419.354.9090, extension 178
> gsmith@nwwsd.org

Please direct requests for clarification or additional information to Gavin Smith at the above address.

Appendix: supported devices – please contact Gavin Smith for a copy of the Appendix.