

Questions to RFP 19-091

Questions 1-12 were received prior to and discussed during the Vendor Conference.

Question 1) In Section 3.1 it states the following; The Iowa Communications Network (ICN) is preparing for a migration of legacy TDM/CAMA services from every Local Exchange Carrier (LEC, includes LEC, CLEC, and RLEC providers) in the State of Iowa to the ICN network on behalf of the Department of Iowa Homeland Security Emergency Management (HSEMD) as authorized by State of Iowa Code Chapter 34A. My question what is the consequences if a company fails to file a response to the RFP?

ICN Response: A vendor is not required to file a response, however another vendor covering that area may respond or if no bids are received for that NXX, the ICN may negotiate directly with that LEC to ensure 911 wireline calls are completed from that service provider. If a Vendor wants to have the opportunity to be considered for award, ICN suggests they respond to the RFP.

Question 2) If a company has an exchange that is in a switch conversion for one switch owner to another and that process that will not be complete until late in 2019, will it be necessary to delay the 911 conversion for that exchange?

ICN Response - ICN will take these details into consideration and score appropriately. We have some flexibility to schedule conversions to best possible time frames to accommodate the parties, however all connectivity is to be complete prior to July 2019.

Question 3) If multiple companies consolidate their 911 DS0s, say 20 end offices, on a DS1 which would become a part of a DS3 delivered to ICN, would that be acceptable? This scenario would apply to the DS1s to both ICN POPs for redundancy.

ICN Response – Yes, consolidation or aggregation is acceptable.

Question 4) Is a hand off for the JFHQ POP acceptable if the DS1/DS3 is handed off to ICN at the Aureon downtown POP on existing facilities? The facility from the Aureon POP may not be redundant, but is on the ICN network.

ICN Response - The five sites ICN identified as the POIs fit the design preferred and those connectivity locations are what will be scored. If vendor offers a different connection point, ICN may consider it; however, the ICN has not allocated points for alternative POI locations.

Question 5) 3.4.5 The Vendor proposed network shall be designed with sufficient resiliency to meet PSG requirements. The proposed network may have single point of entry into each POI due to the Vendor (LEC) connecting to two separate POIs, providing for redundancy. Primary and redundant links shall minimize the sharing of common routes, trenches, or poles. If facility construction is required, Vendor shall identify and detail what is necessary to complete the interconnection. Vendor shall detail how it intends to provide redundant and/or resilient connectivity to POI locations it proposes to connect to. If existing facilities are used at the various POPs and there is not a dual entry to the POP is that acceptable?

ICN Response – Yes, dual entry at the POPs are acceptable, as vendor is required to connect to two POIs, thus providing the redundancy needed. Also note, there are redundant entrances into the POIs.

Question 6)

a. Paragraph 3.4.1 Capacity. All network components, physical network segments, and TDM/CAMA elements shall be designed with no single points of failure. Vendor shall confirm its understanding and provide verification detail. Use of the existing network may have some points of single point of failure, notwithstanding the fact that each office will deliver 2 DS1s to the ICN POP. How will the ICN view an existing network that may not be fully redundant?

ICN Response – ICN is seeking the redundant transport of the 911 call. A solution that is not fully redundant will be considered but the RFP will take into account solutions that provide consolidation and redundancy and score them accordingly.

b. Will that be acceptable until such time as the network is upgraded?

ICN Response - Yes

c. Many network upgrades are planned by RLECs (both CLEC and ILEC) but in many cases it may be after or during the ICN conversion process. Can we get a definitive clarification on what constitutes a single point of failure?

ICN Response – A single point of failure is a part of a system that, if it fails, will stop the entire system from working. ICN's perspective on the single point of failure relates to 911 call transport from each LEC to the 2 POIs. LEC internal networks redundancy are not in this scope although outages that effect 911 calls within that network are still required to be reported to the FCC with outage reason, by the LEC.

Network and Emergency Services providers should design and deploy fault tolerant systems which eliminate, as much as possible, single points of failure that prevent routing 911 calls successfully. The solution must be capable of delivering 911 calls to designated POIs and during difficult times or network failures to alternate facilities that connect to redundant POIs. A single point of failure is an event that prevents the successful routing of 911 calls.

It is understood that during an isolation of the remote switch or another failure of the network, features such as Automatic Number Identification (ANI) and Automatic Location Identification (ALI) may not be provided. NENA Technical Information Document on Network Quality Assurance (03-501 v3) provides NENA's recommendations to accomplish those goals. Adoption of these practices should immediately be considered by all entities involved in providing 9-1-1 service.

d. LEC should have two different cable entrances into their facility. It may be unavoidable using the existing network currently in place.

ICN Response - Trunks being used for 911 should be split between the two (or more) entrances, if Vendor plant utilizes a single entrance, Vendor should note that in its response. ICN will evaluate the responses accordingly.

Follow up comment – some connections between the end office and the Aureon POP are not redundant and due to cost the redundancy upgrade may not take place for some time.

ICN Response – ICN understands this and asks that Vendor identify their current system and proposed design and ICN will evaluate accordingly.

Question 7)

a. Does the ICN today have connectivity to all existing PSAPs?

ICN Response - Yes

b. In the existing 911 network, approximately 12 rural LECs provide last mile special access to the local PSAP. Will that type of connectivity be required in the ICN 911 network? If so, will that be a separate RFP?

ICN Response - The ICN has access to all 113 PSAPs in Iowa. There will be no separate RFP for access at this time.

Question 8) Section 3.3 states the following; 3.3. Mandatory Requirements: **NOTE: if a Vendor does not provide a “compliant” response and supporting detail to each of the Section 3.3 Mandatory Requirements, the Vendor’s bid response will not be evaluated. Merely restating the ICN language without Vendor providing detail to support its confirmation will not enable the ICN to effectively evaluate the Vendor response.** What is the expected response, it is not clear what the ICN considers a “compliant” response?

ICN Response– some questions are a “comply” or “don’t comply”, some ask for details on how vendor complies or meets the RFP requirement. Vendors need to provide sufficient detail so the ICN can evaluate their answers and proposed system/service design and confirm vendor understands the requirements and effectively evaluate the Vendor response.

Question 9) Section 3.11 Price. Vendor shall provide the following pricing related information for each term (24 months & 36 months) CAMA trunk connection being quoted:

3.11.1 Vendor shall provide an all-inclusive Price to deliver CAMA trunks to a primary and secondary location on the POI list. Vendor shall provide corroborating cost details on a per CAMA trunk and TDM carrier basis for Monthly Reoccurring Charges (MRC), as well as any installation or one time fees (NRC).

3.11.2 If Vendor is providing a solution that aggregates multiple service or exchange areas, please include all known costs, which should include cost of connectivity of each Exchange switch and transport of that traffic to 2 of the 5 POIs in a redundant means as much as possible.

3.11.3 Vendor shall detail what is included in its network design and price proposal.

Rural companies have tariffs with pricing that is validated as being cost based and is generally calculated by NECA, filed with

FCC and concurred in for intrastate service. These are filed tariffs with rate filed doctrine for which individual companies would not necessarily have the actual detailed cost support. While the company may have some flexibility in application of the rates, detail cost support would be difficult at best to include in this RFP filing. Will tariff rates be acceptable to the ICN in the pricing and cost support?

ICN Response - ICN is seeking the best rates possible. ICN will accept Tariffed pricing, however ICN asked for 24 & 36 month pricing. If vendor offers tariff pricing, Vendor need to provide a fixed MRC for the term identified, if awarded, the ICN will pay that amount for the balance of the contracted term. If Vendor proposes a tariff price subject to annual escalation, ICN will figure that into the evaluation.

Vendor shall provide cost component detail so the ICN can determine if all geographic areas and system requirements are covered, is something missing on the ICN side or the Vendor side and confirm that the Vendor proposed design is acceptable.

Question 10) Explain the response needed for RFP Attachment 2 Bid Proposal Compliance Form.

ICN Response: Attachment 2 is not scored. This form is where the Bidder affirms their response within the RFP and identifies any exceptions taken or discrepancies with the RFP requirements. The ICN uses this form as an index into the bid response.

If a Bidder does not have any exceptions in a particular chapter an acceptable response would be similar to "no exceptions taken, Vendor will comply"

If Bidder has exceptions an acceptable response would be "see exceptions taken and reasoning within the individual chapter"

Note: If a Bidder has any exceptions to the ICN T&C's they must be identified within its bid response.

Follow up comment – Vendors want to make ICN aware that if something is missing from the RFP response, they did not omit it on purpose and are willing to provide any information needed the ICN requires.

ICN Response – ICN does have the opportunity to ask for clarifications of their bid response. ICN has also revised our Best and Final Offer language so that we have the ability to work through any missing details.

Question 11)

a. The RFP does not define Vendor, so it is highly unclear if some of our client providers will even need to respond.

ICN Response - While "Vendor" is not defined in the traditional sense, Vendor is identified in RFP Sections 1.1 and 2.1.1

1.1 Purpose. The Iowa Communications Network is seeking Bid Proposals from Vendors who can provide CAMA Trunks and 911 Call deliveries to 2 of 5 Points of Interconnects (POIs) identified on the ICN network.

2.1.1 The Contract the ICN expects to award as a result of this Request For Proposal will be based upon the Bid Proposal submitted by the successful Vendor (Vendor awarded the Contract) and this solicitation.

b. Many of the CLEC providers did not receive the RFP, so they then would be completely unaware to even respond by such a short deadline.

ICN Response - the bidders list was assembled with information obtained from the Iowa Utilities Board and the ICN vendor listing, as well as posted on the State of Iowa's Targeted Small Business website and on the ICN website. Although the bidders list included various telecommunications providers and consultants, ICN acknowledges the bidders list was not all inclusive; however the bidders list included 122 contacts. The RFP is a public document, if you wish to share it, feel free to do so. We would also suggest that any prospective bidder that did not receive the RFP, email their contact information to sheri.stephens@iowa.gov, for inclusion on the bidders list or at a minimum to make sure ICN has the correct contact information for their company.

c. Please allow me to now explain the 911 configuration of many providers in Iowa. Our CLEC and some ILEC providers across Iowa have their local 911 delivered by CenturyLink through trunk groups that are leased and transported from CenturyLink, by contract, to designated Iowa PSAPS or selective routers. It seems these specific ILECs or CLECs who use CenturyLink and pay CenturyLink for this 911 trunk and transport to a PSAP would not be answering this RFP. These providers have industry codes such as NXXs to provide local service but ride T1s leased from CenturyLink to get to the 911

centers. These providers do NOT have direct facilities that they own and thus the reason for contracting or leasing from CenturyLink or another incumbent provider. This is the issue at hand, please confirm for me that these provider types who lease 911 facilities through another provider, whether CLEC's or ILECs would not be responsible to or need to answer this RFP. I could provide a letter to show all our client CLECs or ILECs who contract with CenturyLink to provide 911 trunks eased T1s to the Iowa PSAPs or selective routers.

ICN Response - The intent of the RFP is to obtain a system to provide CAMA Trunks and 911 Call deliveries to 2 of 5 Points of Interconnects (POIs) identified on the ICN network. ICN does not have a preference of owned versus leased systems, single vendor connections or an aggregated offer. In either case the Vendor(s) needs to provide the ICN the detail requested in each RFP subsection to make sure the system design being offered meets the redundancy and resiliency required of a public grade network.

Question 12) There is another question and answer period, correct?

ICN Response – Yes, Vendor questions due prior to 4PM, January 16th. ICN will respond by close of business January 18th.

Question 13) Please provide the name of any LEC who is providing service PSAPs in Iowa that is choosing to not go through the CenturyLink SR?

ICN Response – ICN is unable to answer this question, ICN has no way of knowing who currently goes through the CenturyLink Selective Router and who doesn't.

Question 14) Would like to know the number of trunks that they provide to their customers so that we can size accordingly.

ICN Response – If you are asking about Call trunks that are delivered to PSAPs directly, Comtech will be responsible for delivery of proper trunk numbers to the PSAPs, not ICN; that is not in scope of this RFP.