

HOUSTON COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM

Houston County, Georgia

Request For Proposal

For

Internet Access

Internet Access with Managed Firewall Services

E-Rate Funding Year

July 1, 2027 through

June 30, 2028

For all questions about this RFP contact via email:

Rachel Breland

EMAIL – rbreland@houpl.org

Released On:

August 10, 2026

Due On:

October 23, 2026 at 5:00 p.m. EST

1. INTRODUCTION

a. Objective

Our objective is selecting an Internet Service Provider or Internet Services Providers that can provide Internet Access with sufficient speed and bandwidth needed at each of the libraries in the Library System. Responders may bid to provide services for all or any of the member libraries in the HOUPL.

Further, Managed Firewall Services should be compatible with our current firewall and level of protection in order to provide HOUPL with state-of-the-art network protection for the best possible value.

b. Purpose of Procurement

The HOUSTON COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY (HOUPL) invites vendors to submit proposals in accordance with the terms and conditions of this Request for Proposal (RFP). This RFP provides the requirements and evaluative criteria and requests a detailed response from all prospective vendors, including pricing and service descriptions, in a specified format.

HOUPL is seeking proposals from qualified vendors to provide High Speed Internet Access including Managed Firewall Services.

The work proposed in these specifications are dependent upon receipt of E-Rate Funding for Internet Access with Managed Firewall Services for the E-Rate Funding Year July 1, 2027 through June 30, 2028.

The intent of this bid is to enter into a contract for Internet Access with Managed Firewall Services for a one (1) year period to begin July 1, 2027, and run through June 30, 2028. After June 30, 2027, extensions of the contract could be considered for up to two additional years at the discretion of HOUPL and the contracted vendor.

HOUPL certifies that the use of competitive sealed bidding will be practical or advantageous to the Library System in completing the acquisition described in this RFP. Competitive sealed proposals will be submitted in response to this RFP. All proposals submitted pursuant to this request will be made in accordance with the provisions of this RFP.

This project is part of a USAC application for federal "E-RATE" funding. All providers wishing to bid must have a valid SPIN number and be in good standing with USAC.

Vendors are expected to assist in the determination of individual component eligibility as outlined in the current USAC Eligible Services List. Proposals will be evaluated with price as highest criteria followed by experience with schools and the E-Rate program.

All work described in this RFP is contingent upon funding approval.

Vendors must use the SPIN method of invoicing [Service Provider Identification Number].

E-Rate discounts are to be taken off all invoices prior to submittal for payment.

The work proposed in these specifications are dependent upon receipt of E-Rate Funding for Internet

Access with Managed Firewall Services for the E-Rate Funding Year July 1, 2027 through June 30, 2028.

HOUPL reserves the right to terminate any contract, agreement or work schedule if FCC / USAC "E-RATE" funding is cancelled, altered or denied.

During the contract period, should lower pricing be provided to another client, the lower pricing must also be provided for contracts with the HOUPL.

This RFP is not a contract offer. Acceptance of a proposal neither commits HOUPL to award a contract to any vendor, even if all requirements stated in this RFP are not met, nor limits the library's rights to negotiate in the library's best interests. HOUPL reserves the right to contract with a vendor or vendors for reasons other than just price.

Failure to answer any questions in this RFP may subject the proposal to disqualification. Failure to meet qualifications and requirements will not necessarily subject a proposal to disqualification.

It is important that the vendor understands that this Internet Access Proposal has been submitted on HOUPL's E-Rate application which, if approved, will entitle us to approximately 50%-80% discount through the Universal Service Fund. If you are not familiar with this process, please call Judith Malone - 478-987-3050 ext. 5.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

HOUPL currently has internet service provided through Cox Business using 1 GB of dedicated and managed Internet services via fiber LAN Interface with managed firewall services for our 3 library locations:

- **Nola Brantley Memorial Library** is located at 721 Watson Boulevard, Warner Robins, GA 31093. This library has 35 staff and patron computers in addition to wireless Internet access.
- **Centerville Branch Library** is located at 206 Gunn Road, Centerville, GA 31028. This library has 36 staff and patron computers in addition to wireless Internet access.
- **Perry Branch Library** houses the administrative offices for the HOUPL and is located at 1201 Washington Street, Perry, GA 31069. This library has 34 staff and patron computers in addition to wireless Internet access.

3. SCOPE OF WORK

Provide and maintain High Speed Internet service of **1GB/S minimum** for each of the three (3) library branches of the Houston County Public Library System, Georgia.

Internet Service Providers should be able to deliver the following features:

- High Speed Internet service of 1GBs or higher as required by HOUPL.
- IP address allocation for future access to any IP-based library resources.
- CIPA compliant content filtering.
- Content filtering must also allow for unfiltered access to content on the web on demand, either with a bypass code or other method.

Managed Firewall Services should include but be not limited to:

- Firewall configuration, administration, monitoring, report generation as needed with enhanced support.
- Remote access to the firewall in order to install patches and software and firmware upgrades, add or delete user accounts, modify firewall rules, update network configuration.
- Level 1 support services for firewall related issues.
- Ticket escalation to support as required.
- License and maintenance fees for current level of protection.
- Provide the Library System with Network Intrusion Protection and URL Filtering for state-of-the-art network defense.

In the event of firewall failure, the vendor will dispatch a technician to repair the firewall on-site or replace the firewall with one of comparable or better functionality.

Vendors will provide all necessary equipment, connections, routers, etc., needed for Internet Access at each branch.

Vendors will be responsible for all service and maintenance of Internet connections and the content filter.

Troubleshooting service will be provided within four (4) hours of reported problem(s) during normal library hours. Refunds will be provided for periods of service outage lasting more than four (4) hours.

A single point of contact or NOC will be made available in order that problems, concerns, content filter adjustment, etc., can be addressed and follow up can be done within a reasonable amount of time.

Note: Equipment or services produced or provided by a company that the FCC has designated as a national security threat to the integrity of communications networks or the communications supply chain are not eligible for E-Rate support. Vendors should reference the FCC's List of Equipment and Services Covered By Section 2 of The Secure Networks Act at

<https://www.fcc.gov/supplychain/coveredlist> for more information.

4. REQUESTED BANDWIDTH

Library Branch Name	Address	Requested Bandwidth
Nola Brantley Memorial Library	721 Watson Blvd., Warner Robins, GA 31093	1GB/S minimum for each branch
Centerville Public Library	206 Gunn Road, Centerville, GA 31028	1GB/S minimum for each branch
Perry Public Library	1201 Washington Street, Perry, GA 31069	1GB/S minimum for each branch

5. INVOICING

Vendors submitting responses to this RFP agree to provide discounted billing for services associated with this proposal and seek reimbursement of the discount amount according to the invoicing/reimbursement guidelines of the Schools and Libraries Division of the Universal Service Fund. Service providers must use SPIN method of invoicing. HOUPL will pay for the discounted portion of services provided under this proposal. Invoices should be broken down by individual library listing the appropriate discounted charge for each contracted facility. Total costs may be listed minus the applicable discount amount to arrive at the discounted amount for each library in the HOUPL. Discounts should be applied to each invoice prior to submittal for payment.

HOUPL IS EXEMPT FROM Georgia State Sales Tax. Net prices as shown in the proposal shall exclude said State tax amounts. Bidders shall inform all prospective subcontractors and supplies from whom they expect to obtain services or supplies of the tax-exempt status of HOUPL. Following a contract award, an exemption certificate will be furnished by HOUPL.

6. INSURANCE

Contractor is responsible for obtaining necessary insurances, licenses and permits.

- The Firm will maintain or carry Commercial General Liability Insurance coverage in an amount not less than \$1,000,000 over the primary insurance.
- The Firm will maintain Workers Compensation Insurance for all of its employees connected to this agreement. Such insurance shall comply with all applicable state laws and shall be in an amount determined by the Georgia Workers Compensation Statutory Limits.
- The Firm shall provide HOUPL a Certificate of Insurance showing proof of insurance. Certificates containing wording that releases the insurance company from liability for non-notification of cancellation of the insurance policy are not acceptable.
- The Firm and/or its insurers are responsible for payment of any liability arising out of Workers' Compensation, unemployment, or employee benefits offered to its employees.
- All said insurance shall contain a provision that coverage afforded under the policies will not be canceled unless and until thirty (30) days prior written notice has been given to HOUPL.

7. SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

This Request for Proposals will be governed by the following schedule:

DATES	ACTION
August 10 th , 2026	Release of RFP
September 4 th , 2026	Deadline for written questions
	Answers to written questions posted on the HCPL website (will be posted as they are received). Questions must be directed only to Rachel Breland via email. rbreland@houpl.org
October 23 rd , 2026	Proposals due – via email or hand delivery ONLY

8. MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

- Firms must have a minimum of 3 years of experience in providing related services.
- Firms must provide at least 2 references.
- Firms must have no conflict-of-interest issues while under contract to HOUPL for these services.
- Firms must have a license to do business issued from the State of Georgia.

9. GUIDELINES FOR RFP EVALUATION

HOUPL will be evaluating and weighing the following criteria when considering the various proposals. These standards are listed in descending order of importance.

Evaluation Criteria	Weight
Cost effectiveness of service	50%
Comprehensive implementation designed to minimize disruption of current library Internet activities	25%
Experience and capabilities of account support group	15%
Locality to Houston County Public Libraries	10%
Total	100%

10. SUBMITTAL INFORMATION

Submittal of proposals must be received no later than: October 23rd, 2026

All bids from interested firms must contain the following to be considered:

- *Proof of E-Verify Compliance*
- *Proof of Liability Insurance*
- *Proof of Georgia Business License*
- *The names, titles, and email addresses/phone numbers of at least 2 references*
- *Agreement to project criteria and all requirements found in RFP*
- *Itemized list for all priced items (material and non-material) to be used, priced in accordance with HOUPL's sales tax exemption status.*
- *Signed "STATEMENT OF VENDOR'S QUALIFICATION" found on page 13 of this document*
- *Signed "SIGNATURE PAGE" found on page 14 of this document*
- *Signed "Contractor Affidavit under O.C.G.A. § 13-10-91(b)(1)" found on page 15 of this document*

Sealed submittals can be mailed or hand delivered to:

Houston County Public Library System

1201 Washington Street,

Perry GA 31069

Attn: Judith Malone, Director

Emailed proposals should be sent and addressed to Judith Malone, jmalone@houpl.org.

No faxed copies will be accepted.

Any offer submitted as a result of this (RFP) shall be binding on the firm for forty-five (45) calendar days following the specified opening date. Any offer for which the vendor specifies a shorter acceptance period will be rejected.

Vendors requesting a walkthrough of existing library buildings and existing systems shall request via email with subject header "Walkthrough Request – Internet Services" to Rachel Breland, rbreland@houpl.org.

If multiple walkthrough requests are received, HOUPL will schedule a set time for the walkthrough for all the vendors to be done at a one-time occurrence.

According to USF Regulations HOUPL MUST select a vendor, award a contract, AND file a form 471 No Later than 11:59 PM on the day of the close of the FCC Form 471 application filing window (exact date to be determined by USAC)

Proposed Cost: A proposed fee structure for the work to be performed including costs from all anticipated subcontractors (if any).

Warranty & Specifications: Bidder should submit a copy of any warranties indicating duration of said warranty and manufacturer instructions. The Bidder may not substitute materials without written permission. Vendors must provide proof that materials are equal to or superior to that specified in Project Manual.

11. DEADLINE ENFORCED

PROPOSALS DELIVERED AFTER THE TIME AND DATE SET FOR RECEIPT OF PROPOSALS SHALL NOT BE ACCEPTED. IT IS THE POTENTIAL FIRM'S RESPONSIBILITY TO ENSURE TIMELY DELIVERY OF THEIR PROPOSAL. WEATHER, FLIGHT DELAYS, CARRIER ERRORS AND OTHER ACTS OF OTHERWISE EXCUSABLE NEGLIGENCE ARE RISKS ALLOCATED TO FIRMS AND WILL NOT BE EXEMPTED FROM DEADLINE REQUIREMENTS. TELEPHONE OR FACSIMILE PROPOSALS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

12. GENERAL PROCUREMENT

Firms are cautioned that any statements made by HOUPL staff or advisors that materially change any portion of this document are NOT binding on HOUPL, and shall not be relied upon unless subsequently ratified by written amendment. All changes shall be in the form of a written amendment. Oral information obtained otherwise will NOT be considered in awarding a contract.

Your proposal or bid is a public document under the Georgia Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), except as to information that may be treated as confidential as an exception to disclosure under the FOIA. If you cannot agree to this standard, please do not submit your proposal or bid.

HOUPL accepts no responsibility for any expenses incurred by the Firm in the preparation and presentation of an offer. Such expenses shall be borne exclusively by the firm.

HOUPL reserves the right to reject any or all offers; to waive any informality or irregularity not affected by law; to evaluate, in its absolute discretion, the offers submitted; and to award the contract according to the offer which best serves the interest of HOUPL, or to not award the contract if HOUPL determines that it is not in its best interest to do so.

All submittals shall become the property of HOUPL, and shall not be returned to the vendor, provided that all proprietary information and/or processes of the vendor contained therein, if any, shall remain the property of the vendor.

All information qualifying as proprietary under the Georgia Freedom of Information Act, and designated as such, shall be considered confidential and such information shall not be subject to review by outside individuals or organizations, except as may be compelled by judicial process and in accordance with applicable laws, regulations and City policies. All proprietary information must be clearly marked as "Proprietary".

If the Offeror discovers any ambiguity, conflict, discrepancy, omission or other error in the RFP, Offeror/Proposer shall immediately notify HOUPL of such error in writing and request modification or clarification of the document. The Proposer is responsible for clarifying any ambiguity, conflict, discrepancy; omission or other error in the RFP or it shall be deemed waived.

The words "Bidder", "Firm", "Supplier", "Offeror", "Contractor", "Proposer", "Respondent" and "Firm" are used interchangeably throughout this proposal, and are used in place of the person, firm, or corporation submitting a proposal on the scope of services or any part thereof.

13. AWARD OF CONTRACT

HOUPL reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, to waive any informality in any proposal, to act as sole judge of the merit of each response submitted, to select a firm based on the criteria stated.

According to USF Regulations HOUPL MUST select a vendor, award a contract, AND file a form 471 No Later than 11:59 PM on the day of the close of the FCC Form 471 application filing window (exact date to be determined by USAC)

NO CONTRACT MAY BE SIGNED PRIOR TO the Allowable Vendor Selection/Contract Date as set by USAC.

Attached to these specifications are two Proposal Forms which must be completely filled out and signed by each bidder and included in their RFP submission.

14. FORM OF CONTRACT

The successful bidder will be required to execute a written contract with HOUPL within twenty (20) business days after acceptance of proposal or proposals. It is expressly understood and agreed by the bidders that the contractual obligations of HOUPL to the bidders are effective only 1) after the execution of a contract or contracts signed by all parties and 2) E-Rate funding is secured from the School and Libraries Division of the Universal Service Fund.

Contractors must include Contractor E-Verify Affidavit as part of their submittal package.

15. REQUIREMENTS

The successful firm shall comply with all instructions and shall perform services in a manner commensurate with the highest professional standards by qualified and experienced personnel. A current business license is required to submit a bid or proposal.

The contractor awarded this RFP shall be fully responsible for the provision and support of goods and services required hereunder. Any subcontractors shall be approved in writing and in advance by HOUPL; all contractors and sub-contractors shall adhere to the resulting original RFP and the terms of any resulting Agreement(s). Contractors and any subcontractors and all visitors related to such contract shall conduct themselves in a professional and courteous manner at all times, as well as any other customers, contractors or individuals with whom the contractor comes in contact as a result of this contract or in the course of providing goods or services hereunder while working or visiting the library.

If HOUPL, in its sole discretion, reasonably believes that an employee, agent or subcontractor of the Contractor assigned to provide goods or services to HOUPL pursuant to this Agreement has engaged in conduct inconsistent with the requirements herein, HOUPL may so notify the Contractor and the Contractor shall promptly reassign said employee, agent or subcontractor so that they will no longer provide goods or services pursuant to this Agreement.

16. REQUIREMENT FOR CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS

- a. The Contractor shall warrant that they will only assign employees who have passed a criminal background check to perform work under this contract. The background checks shall demonstrate the worker has no convictions or pending criminal charges that would render the worker unsuitable. Disqualifying convictions or charges include, but are not limited to, sexual offenses, violent offenses, and drug offenses.
- b. The Contractor warrants they are supplying employees who have passed a background check(s). Contractor agrees to defend, indemnify and hold harmless HOUPL, its officers, directors and employees for any claims, suits or proceedings alleging a breach of this warranty.

17. E-VERIFY COMPLIANCE

The Georgia E-Verify law requires contractors and all sub-contractors on Georgia public contracts (contracts with a government agency) for the physical performance of services over \$2,499.99 in value to enroll in E-Verify, regardless of the number of employees. A contractor or sub-contractor may be exempt from this requirement if the contractor or sub-contractor has no employees and does not hire nor intend to hire employees for the purpose of completing any part of the public contract.

For a public contract, contractors must sign the Contractor E-Verify Affidavit, all subcontractors must sign the Subcontractor E-Verify Affidavit and all Sub-subcontractors must sign the Sub-Subcontractor Affidavit. HOUPL is required to ensure that the Contractor E-Verify Affidavit is part of the contract; however, the contractor is responsible for all subcontractor affidavits and the subcontractors are responsible for the sub-subcontractors affidavits.

For contractor's not familiar with Georgia's E-Verify laws, more information can be found at:
<https://verify9.com/state-laws/georgia-e-verify/>

18. QUESTIONS

All questions pertaining to this RFP must be submitted in writing by email to rbreland@houpl.org

All questions must be submitted by September 5th, 2026 at 5:00 PM EST and will be answered in the form of an FAQ which will be posted to https://houpl.org/about/rfp_documents.php

Bidders are responsible for information, changes, additions, etc., posted on the FAQ on the library website at https://houpl.org/about/rfp_documents.php. These answers shall then be considered a part of the specifications. No questions will be address via telephone.

19. ADDENDA AND CLARIFICATIONS

HOUPL, at its sole discretion, elect to issue changes to the FRP and will issue changes in the form of a written addendum. Written addenda shall be the ONLY FORM of amendment to the Solicitation. Other written information or verbal communications, including but not limited to discussion in a Pre-Bid conference, shall not constitute a change to the requirements of the RFP.

Addenda, if issued, will be posted on to HOUPL website at https://houpl.org/about/rfp_documents.php prior to the date and time of the Bid Opening.

It is the Bidder's responsibility to ensure receipt of any addenda issued. Failure of any Bidder to receive any such addendum or interpretation shall not relieve the Bidder from any obligations under its Bid as submitted. All addenda shall become part of the Contract documents.

20. APPENDIX

PROPOSAL FORM - STATEMENT OF VENDOR'S QUALIFICATION

To accompany proposals submitted for Internet Access for the Houston County Public Library System.

Name of Vendor's Firm: _____

Name of Company Representative: _____

Business Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

When Organized? _____

Where Organized? _____

Partnership: _____

Corporation: _____

-Vendor must provide a Service Provider Information Number assigned by the Schools and Libraries Division (SLD)-

SPIN Number: _____

How many years have you been engaged in this business under the present firm name?

Please attach to this statement at least three references, including: (name, address, title, phone number and brief description of work performed, including dates of work).

Date: _____

Firm Name: _____

By: _____

Title: _____

PROPOSAL FORM - SIGNATURE PAGE

Date _____

TO: Houston County Public Library System

This proposal is submitted in accordance with your RFP inviting proposals to be received for the project identified as "Internet Access." Having carefully examined the RFP, all instructions, specifications, all addenda and/or FAQs, and being familiar with the various conditions affecting the work, the undersigned, hereby agrees to furnish all material, perform all labor, and do all else necessary to complete the work in strict accordance with the specifications for price as contained herein.

In the event this proposal is accepted the undersigned is hereby bound to commence and complete all of the work included under this contract in such time and such manner as designated for the various items the bidder has contracted to supply or perform.

In submitting this proposal, it is understood that the unrestricted right is reserved by HOUPL in making the award to reject any and all proposals or parts thereof, or to waive any informalities or technicalities in said proposals.

The undersigned hereby certifies that this proposal is genuine and made in the interest or in behalf of any person, firm or corporation not herein named; that the undersigned has not directly or indirectly induced or solicited any bidder to refrain from submitting proposals, and that the undersigned has not, in any manner, sought by collusion to secure for himself an advantage over any other bidder.

TOTAL AMOUNT PROPOSAL OPTION: _____

ALL FIELDS MUST BE FILLED IN FOR CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSAL

Federal EIN or SSN: _____

E-Rate SPIN: _____

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Contractor Affidavit under O.C.G.A. § 13-10-91(b)(1)

By executing this affidavit, the undersigned contractor verifies its compliance with O.C.G.A. § 13-10-91, stating affirmatively that the individual, firm or corporation which is engaged in the physical performance of services on behalf of _____

_____ (name of employer) has registered with, is authorized to use and uses the federal work authorization program commonly known as E-Verify, or any subsequent replacement program, in accordance with the applicable provisions and deadlines established in O.C.G.A. § 13-10-91. Furthermore, the undersigned contractor will continue to use the federal work authorization program throughout the contract period and the undersigned contractor will contract for the physical performance of services in satisfaction of such contract only with subcontractors who present an affidavit to the contractor with the information required by O.C.G.A. § 13-10-91 (b). Contractor hereby attests that its federal work authorization user identification number and date of authorization are as follows:

Federal Work Authorization User Identification Number

Date of Authorization

Name of Contractor

Name of Project

Name of Public Employer

I hereby declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Executed on _____, 20____, in _____ (city), _____ (state)

Signature of Authorized Officer or Agent / Printed Name and Title of Authorized Officer or Agent

SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN BEFORE ME

ON THIS THE ____ DAY OF _____, 20____

NOTARY PUBLIC

My Commission Expires: