REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)
CATEGORY TWO – INTERNAL CONNECTIONS
E-RATE FUNDING YEAR 2027

FCC FORM 470#: 270003528
APPLICANT NAME: RUTHERFORD COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM
BILLED ENTITY NUMBER: 128243

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

The Applicant identified above hereby solicits competitive proposals from qualified Service Providers for the provision of E-Rate eligible Category Two equipment, products, and/or services pursuant to the Schools and Libraries Universal Service Support Mechanism (E-Rate Program) as administered by the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) under authority of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

This procurement is subject to all applicable federal, state, and local procurement laws, FCC regulations, USAC program requirements, and any Applicant-specific policies.

Service Providers responding to this solicitation are solely responsible for ensuring full compliance with all applicable E-Rate competitive bidding, pricing, equipment eligibility, invoicing, and record retention requirements.

RFP TIMELINE

- **RFP Issued:** 11/05/2026
- **Deadline for Submission of Questions:** 11/13/2026
- **Responses to Questions / Addenda Issued By:** 11/18/2026
- **Proposal Submission Deadline:** 12/18/2026

Mandatory Compliance Notice:
In accordance with FCC rules, the proposal submission deadline shall allow for no fewer than twenty-eight (28) full days from the posting date of the associated FCC Form 470 and/or RFP, whichever is later.

RFP CONTACTS

All communications regarding this procurement must be directed exclusively to all designated contacts below:

- Kevin Robertson: krobertson@rclstn.org
- Ryan Woodroof: rcwoodroof@rclstn.org
- Skylands E-Rate Operations Team: bids@e-rate.org

COMMUNICATION AND PROCUREMENT INTEGRITY REQUIREMENTS

Authorized Communications:

- All questions, requests for clarification, and correspondence must be submitted in writing via email to **all** designated RFP contacts.
- Responses to material questions shall be issued through formal written addenda. If no questions are received as outlined in the RFP timeline, an addenda will not be posted for question-and-answer purposes.
- Verbal communications, informal discussions, and individual interpretations will not and shall not be binding.

Strict Prohibition on Unauthorized Contact:
Offerors are expressly prohibited from contacting any employee, representative, or agent of the Applicant not expressly authorized in this RFP. This includes, but is not limited to Board members, Superintendents/Directors, IT personnel not listed herein, Procurement staff not listed herein, Consultants other than designated contacts.

Violation of this restriction will result in immediate disqualification.

Duty to Monitor:
Offerors bear sole responsibility for monitoring the following on a regular basis:

- FCC Form 470 postings
- EPC updates
- Applicant communications
- Addenda
- Procurement portals, where applicable

Failure to monitor updates shall not relieve Offerors of compliance obligations.

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Submission Instructions:

- Proposals **must** be submitted electronically to **all** listed RFP contacts.
- Late submissions shall be automatically disqualified.
- Applicant receipt timestamp shall control submission timeliness.
- Partial submissions may be rejected unless expressly permitted.
  Offerors are solely responsible for ensuring timely and complete delivery of proposals, including mitigation of technical failures or transmission delays.

Mandatory Proposal Components:

Each proposal must include, at minimum:

- Applicant name
- BEN
- FCC Form 470 number
- Service Provider Name
- Service Provider Identification Number (SPIN)
- Service Provider contact information
- Terms and conditions
- Completed pricing worksheet

Each proposal is encouraged to include the following. Failure to provide the following may adversely affect the scoring of your proposal.

- SPI invoicing capability certification
- E-Rate compliance certifications (broad compliance with FCC rules, USAC procedures, LCP, Gift Rules, Record Retention, etc.)
- Supply chain compliance certification (ensures compliance with FCC Order 19-121)
- Debarment/suspension certification (confirms vendor is not FCC barred, Federal debarred, SAM excluded, etc.)
- FCC Red Light Rule Compliance Certification. Offerors should certify that they are not currently subject to the FCC's Red Light Rule (47 C.F.R. § 1.1910), are in good standing with all FCC financial obligations, and are not delinquent on any debts owed to the FCC.
- Conflict of interest disclosure (vendor disclosure statement that ensures no unfair bidding advantage or relationships have improperly influenced the procurement process, proposal development, or bid submission).
    - Failure to fully disclose relevant conflicts may result in disqualification, contract termination, or referral to appropriate regulatory authorities.

Proposal Validity:
Proposals must remain valid for a minimum of 180 days from submission unless otherwise stated.

Proposal Exceptions / Deviations:
By submitting a proposal, the Offeror acknowledges that it has reviewed and agrees to comply with the terms, conditions, and requirements set forth in this RFP unless specific exceptions are clearly identified in the proposal submission.

Any proposed exceptions, deviations, or alternative terms must be explicitly disclosed in writing as part of the proposal response.

The Applicant reserves the sole right to determine the acceptability of any exceptions, may require withdrawal of unacceptable exceptions, and may consider exceptions or deviations in proposal evaluation and scoring.

Failure to clearly disclose exceptions may result in proposal disqualification or rejection.

PRE-BID MEETING / SITE VISIT

No pre-bid conference or site visit will be conducted.

SCOPE OF WORK

The Applicant seeks proposals for E-Rate eligible Category Two equipment and/or services.

- **Installation:** IS NOT required. If installation services are provided, the vendor must provide final asset documentation including make, model, serial number, installation location, and as-built documentation where applicable. Equipment must also be labelled in accordance with professional standards when installed.
- **Partial Bids:** WILL NOT be accepted. Offerors must propose all line items identified in the Scope of Work.

Proposals must be based on the specified manufacturer makes and models or functionally equivalent equipment that meets or exceeds the technical specifications set forth in this solicitation. All proposed equipment must be suitable for use in the Applicant's Category 2 internal connections environment and fully compatible with existing infrastructure where applicable.

If proposing alternative makes or models, the Offeror must submit complete technical specifications, product data sheets, and any supporting documentation sufficient to demonstrate functional equivalency, including equivalency in performance, capacity, interoperability, and intended use. The Applicant retains sole, final, and absolute discretion to determine whether any proposed alternative meets the requirements of this solicitation and qualifies as functionally equivalent.

Quantities identified in this Scope of Work are estimates provided for bidding and evaluation purposes only and reflect the Applicant's reasonable anticipated Category 2 needs at the time of posting. Actual quantities may be modified prior to award based on final design validation, site surveys, engineering recommendations, funding constraints, or E-Rate eligibility determinations.

The Applicant reserves the right to increase, decrease, substitute, or eliminate quantities or items in whole or in part.

This solicitation is issued in accordance with FCC E-Rate competitive bidding requirements (including Form 470 procedures) and does not constitute a commitment to purchase any minimum or maximum quantity of goods or services. The Applicant reserves the right to award all, part, or none of the proposals received, to make multiple awards if deemed in the best interest of the Applicant, or to cancel this solicitation in its entirety, consistent with applicable E-Rate program rules.

Description	Make (or equivalent)	Model (or equivalent)	Quantity
Cloud managed 48-port PoE switch	Cisco Meraki	MS250-48FP-HW	3
Systems Manager Enterprise subscription license (1 year)	Cisco Meraki	LIC-SME-1YR	5
MR Series Enterprise subscription license (1 year)	Cisco Meraki	LIC-ENT-1YR	24
MS120-24P Enterprise subscription license (1 year)	Cisco Meraki	LIC-MS120-24P-1YR	1
MS225-24P Enterprise subscription license (1 year), incl. Enterprise Support	Cisco Meraki	LIC-MS225-24P-1YR	1
CAT6 plenum (CMP) cable, 1000 ft box, UTP, 550 MHz, 23 AWG, 4-pair	N/A (Generic)	CAT6 Plenum Cable 1000'	6

PRICING REQUIREMENTS

All proposals must include:

- Itemized unit pricing
- Extended totals
- Separate eligible/ineligible cost allocation
- MRC (Monthly Recurring Charges)
- NRC (Non-Recurring Charges)
- Installation labor (not requested under this RFP; do not include)
- Configuration costs
- Shipping/freight
- Taxes and fees
- Warranty costs
- Licensing fees (if applicable)

Pricing Integrity:

- Pricing must remain firm for full contract duration.
- No unilateral price escalations permitted.
- Promotional pricing exceeding 90 days must be reflected where applicable.
- Pricing must comply with Lowest Corresponding Price rules.

Tariffs / Import Costs:

If tariff exposure exists, Offeror must clearly disclose:

- Affected products
- Proposed adjustment methodology
- Contractual limitations

Applicant retains sole discretion over acceptance.

CONTRACT CONDITIONS

- Applicant intends to enter into a legally binding written agreement.
- Month-to-month proposals will not be accepted.
- Annual appropriation/non-appropriation provisions may apply.
- Written amendments are mandatory for all changes.
- Equipment substitutions require mutual written approval.
- FCC service delivery deadline extensions may be incorporated where applicable.
- Applicant is not obligated to purchase full quoted quantities.
- Contract award may be whole or partial.

The Applicant intends to enter into a multi-year agreement. Proposals must include an initial contract term commencing April 1, 2027 and concluding September 30, 2028, with the option, at the Applicant's discretion, to extend the agreement for one additional one-year term through September 30, 2029.

BEST AND FINAL OFFER (BAFO)

The Applicant reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to request Best and Final Offers (BAFO) from all responsive and responsible Offerors.

If BAFO is utilized:

- All eligible Offerors shall receive equal notice
- Uniform submission requirements shall apply
- Identical deadlines shall be enforced
- BAFO requests shall preserve full FCC competitive bidding compliance

Nothing herein obligates Applicant to request BAFO.

EVALUATION CRITERIA
In full compliance with FCC requirements, the cost of E-Rate eligible products and services shall be the single highest weighted evaluation factor.

Additional evaluation criteria with less weight may also be taken into consideration during the selection process.

Applicant reserves sole discretion in proposal evaluation consistent with applicable law.

DISQUALIFICATION FACTORS
Proposals will be disqualified for the following reasons:

- Late submission
- Unauthorized communications
- Does not have a SPIN at the time of proposal submission
- Failure to meet specifications
- Generic or non-responsive pricing
- Submission of a response generated by Artificial Intelligence that contains materially incomplete, inaccurate, or misleading information and/or is not tailored specifically to the Applicant and/or needs of the RFP.
- Inclusion of generic or overly broad pricing lists that do not reflect the specific requirements of this RFP.
- Failure to comply with procurement instructions
- Failure to provide required pricing worksheet

INVOICING REQUIREMENTS
The Applicant reserves the sole right to select the invoicing method for the requested products and/or services. By submitting a proposal, the offeror acknowledges and accepts the Applicant's right to choose between the Billed Entity Applicant Reimbursement (BEAR) method or the Service Provider Invoicing (SPI) method.

BEAR Method (FCC Form 472): If the BEAR method is selected, the offeror shall invoice the Applicant for the full cost of the eligible products and/or services. The Applicant will then seek reimbursement for the discounted portion directly from USAC using FCC Form 472.

SPI Method (FCC Form 474): If the SPI method is selected, the Applicant's E-rate discount will be reflected on the FCC Form 471 and confirmed in the Funding Commitment Decision Letter (FCDL), if issued. The offeror shall invoice USAC directly for the discounted portion using FCC Form 474 and agrees not to invoice the Applicant for any amount covered by the E-rate discount.

Vendor Obligations:

- Timely invoicing cooperation
- Documentation support
- USAC compliance
- No disruption due to billing disputes

ADMINISTRATIVE, PROCUREMENT, AND E-RATE COMPLIANCE PROVISIONS

- Procurement Rights and Reservation of Authority
    - The Applicant reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to award contracts in whole, in part, to multiple vendors, or not at all, based on the Applicant's needs, available funding, and the requirements established in this solicitation.
    - The Applicant further reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, waive informalities or minor irregularities, request clarifications, and make award decisions determined to be in the best interest of the Applicant and consistent with all applicable E-Rate and public procurement requirements.
    - In the event of conflict between this RFP and applicable state/local procurement laws, applicable law shall control.
    - The Applicant may, at its sole discretion, extend proposal deadlines, amend procurement schedules, or cancel this solicitation in whole or in part if deemed necessary or advantageous.
- Proposal Submission, Public Disclosure, and Confidentiality
    - Submission of a proposal does not create any binding contractual obligation for the Applicant unless and until a formal written agreement and/or authorized purchase order has been fully executed.
    - Following contract award and execution, proposal documents may be subject to public inspection in accordance with applicable public records laws.
    - Offerors may designate specific portions of their proposals as "Proprietary" or "Confidential," provided such information is clearly identified and readily separable from non-confidential content. The Applicant will make reasonable efforts to protect properly designated confidential information to the extent permitted by law.
    - Pricing, service costs, and other cost-related information shall not be considered proprietary or confidential and may be publicly disclosed.
- Contract Formation and Financial Protections
    - The Applicant reserves the right to reevaluate the cost-effectiveness of contracted services throughout the contract term, consistent with contractual rights and E-Rate program requirements.
    - Offerors proposing products potentially subject to price fluctuations due to tariffs, import restrictions, or other governmental actions must clearly disclose affected products and provide a defined methodology for controlling or limiting future pricing adjustments.

- Conflict of Interest and Competitive Integrity
    - By submitting a proposal, each Offeror certifies that no actual or potential conflict of interest exists that would compromise the fairness of this procurement or create an unfair competitive advantage.
    - The Applicant will conduct this procurement in a fair, open, and competitive manner consistent with FCC E-Rate rules. No vendor, including incumbents, shall receive preferential treatment or improper advantage.
    - Any proposal determined to involve collusion, undisclosed conflicts, or improper competitive influence will be disqualified.
- E-Rate Compliance Requirements
    - This procurement is subject to all applicable Federal Communications Commission (FCC), Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC), and E-Rate program rules.
    - All participating vendors must comply with all E-Rate requirements, including but not limited to:
        - Service Provider Identification Number (SPIN) eligibility
        - FCC Red Light Rule compliance
        - Lowest Corresponding Price requirements
        - Debarment and suspension certifications
        - Gift rule compliance
        - Eligible services compliance
        - SPI invoicing capability, if required
        - Record retention obligations
    - Failure to maintain E-Rate compliance may result in proposal disqualification or contract termination.
- Product Demonstrations and Trial Equipment Restrictions
    - To preserve the integrity of the competitive bidding process, product demonstrations, vendor meetings, or equipment evaluations during the active procurement window may be restricted or denied.
    - Following the close of the competitive bidding period, temporary equipment loans for evaluation purposes may be permitted only if:
        - The duration is clearly limited
        - Terms are documented
        - No improper competitive advantage is created
        - Demonstrations or evaluation equipment may only be accepted where permitted by law and where such activities do not compromise competitive fairness.
- Supply Chain Compliance Certification
    - By submitting a proposal, the Offeror certifies compliance with FCC Order 19-121 and all related federal supply chain security requirements.
    - Offerors further certify that proposed equipment and services do not include any equipment, services, or components from entities identified on the FCC's Covered List, including but not limited to Huawei Technologies Company, ZTE Corporation, or any successor-designated covered entities.

    - The Offeror acknowledges that non-compliance may result in proposal disqualification, contract cancellation, or other remedies as permitted by law.
- Installation Completion Deadline
    - All products and services must be delivered and installed in accordance with applicable E-Rate service delivery deadlines unless officially extended by FCC or USAC.

RECORD RETENTION / AUDIT REQUIREMENTS

Pursuant to 47 C.F.R. § 54.516, Service Providers are required to adhere to the following obligations regarding document retention, records production, and audits.

- Service Providers must retain all documents related to the delivery of discounted telecommunications and other supported services for a minimum of ten (10) years following the final day of service delivery. Additionally, any records that demonstrate compliance with statutory or regulatory requirements under the schools and libraries support mechanism must also be retained. Detailed guidelines on document retention can be found in the FCC's Fifth Report and Order (FCC 04-190).
- Upon request, Service Providers shall produce relevant records to any authorized representative, including auditors appointed by state education departments, the program Administrator, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), or any local, state, or federal agency with jurisdiction over the matter.
- Service Providers shall be subject to audits and investigations to verify compliance with all statutory and regulatory requirements applicable to the schools and libraries universal service support program. This includes compliance concerning the procurement, delivery, and usage of services and products.
- Service Providers may protect confidential information except where disclosure is required by FCC, USAC, governmental auditors, or applicable law.
- Service Providers are responsible for ensuring that any subcontractors they engage also comply fully with the FCC's requirements related to document retention, records production, and audits.

LOWEST CORRESPONDING PRICE

In accordance with 47 C.F.R. § 54.511, Service Providers are prohibited from submitting bids or charging libraries prices that exceed the Lowest Corresponding Price (LCP) for supported services. Exceptions apply only if the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) for interstate services, or the relevant state commission for intrastate services, determines that the LCP is not compensatory. Additionally, promotional rates offered by a Service Provider for periods longer than 90 days must be factored into the comparable rates used to establish the LCP.

All proposals submitted in response to this Form 470 must comply with the E-rate program requirement to offer the Lowest Corresponding Price (LCP). For further details, please refer to the official USAC guidance regarding Lowest Corresponding Price requirements.

COST OF PROPOSALS

All costs and expenses associated with the preparation and submission of proposals in response to this Scope of Work shall be borne exclusively by the vendor.

******* END OF RFP *******