MARIA Network Services RFP
Preproposal Conference Questions and Answers
June 11, 2020

This document contains answers to the questions asked during the June 10, 2020 preproposal conference.  If you asked a question or have an additional question that is not answered here, please email rfp@marialliance.net for clarification.  Please rely on these official answers and not on any notes taken during the Preproposal Conference.

A new version of Attachment 5, Pricing Worksheet, will be published on the MARIA Procurement website (https://www.marialliance.net/procurement) in the next few days.  This version will include updates for the already published error in the Notes column and to delete duplicate rows containing Items 21 and 22.

1.  Is there a minimum number of circuits/services that a firm must respond to in order to be able to submit a proposal?
   *MARIA recognizes that Firms have strengths in different geographic areas and welcomes proposals ranging from a single circuit or service to all entries marked green in the worksheet.*

2.  Does MARIA have a preferred mix of NRC and MRC for the pricing submission?
   *MARIA offers no advice on pricing decisions for how firms should allocate costs to MRC or NRC.  However, the following information may be useful as firms make their pricing decisions:*
      a.  *MARIA will evaluate pricing based on the full cost of the circuit over its term, i.e., the life-cycle cost that includes all one-time and recurring charges divided by the term.*
      b.  *Flexibility with MRC/NRC can be mentioned in a proposal and discussed during negotiations.*

3.  Please clarify the definition of Protected Services.
   *Protected Services circuits are described in Sections III.2 and III.4 and further defined by Section III.6.a.  The idea behind protected services is that the circuit will continue to function during any single failure (fiber cut, equipment breakdown, etc.) within the service provider's network.  Note that this fault tolerance is within the service provider's network and does not extend to the fiber that connects the service to the MARIA member's router.  With Protected Services, MARIA members expect to make a local unprotected connection to a protected long-haul network.  For example, the fault tolerance requirement also does not extend to the GBIC or line card used by the service provider to terminate the connection from the MARIA member's router.  Background: MARIA members typically use multiple circuits to and from different physical endpoints using multiple service providers and create true campus network resiliency at Layer 3.*

4. Will fiber maps be provided for the areas where overlap needs to be avoided?
*Existing fiber path maps were often provided to MARIA members by vendors and may not be available for distribution. MARIA will post a general description of areas that need to be avoided in the next few days. A full path placement discussion will be held during negotiations.*

5. How does the process described in Section III.6.d, Alternate Member Endpoints work? Would the use of an Alternate Member Endpoint impact Protected Services?
*MARIA members operate large campus networks containing many miles of optical fiber and members often have fiber splice points and buildings located near public rights of way. Some of these locations may be more cost effective for a Firm to reach than the actual endpoint specified in the MARIA Pricing Table. Firms wishing to explore potential Alternate Member Endpoints should follow the contact procedures defined in Section VI.B, Issuance of RFP and Questions. The use of a MARIA Alternate Member Endpoint does not impact Protected Services.*

6. Can MARIA be more specific on Testing Requirements?
*MARIA has no additional requirements to provide at this point in the procurement. Testing Requirements are a topic for negotiations and contract language might include vendor proposed language. MARIA members primarily want all services burned in and tested in a reasonable way, e.g., OTDR traces for dark fiber, frame error rates for Layer 2 services, etc., etc.*

7. Section V.B.9 requests the volume of existing sales to MARIA members. Has MARIA obtained permission from each of its members in order to obtain this information?
*MARIA has not requested permission from each of its members to obtain this information. Firms responding to the RFP may choose to leave Section V.B.9 blank, without penalty.*

8. Does Section V.B.11 contain all of the licensing requirement in the RFP?
*Yes, this section details all known licensing requirements.*

9. Section 5.E describes Site Visits. What is the purpose of these Site Visits?
*MARIA's evaluation team may feel that the only way to really understand some set of issues is via an in-person visit. While the MARIA Selection Committee cannot think of any reason for a site visit now, the need for a site visit is a future possibility.*

10. Can MARIA extend the proposal due date by two to three weeks?
*MARIA would normally not extend the proposal due date. However, with the national health emergency and all of the associated disruptions, MARIA will extend the due date by two weeks. An update to the RFP schedule will be posted on the MARIA procurement web site by the end of the week. MARIA strongly suggests that proposals be submitted a day or two before the deadline to ensure that they avoid potential email glitches.*

11. How many IP addresses, if any, need to be supplied for each Business Internet connection?
*One public IPv4 address (IPv4) must be included with each connection. The service must include the ability for a MARIA member to optionally purchase at least two additional IPv4 addresses.*

12. Will MARIA supply a router and firewall for Business Internet connections described in Attachment 5, Pricing Workbook?
*Yes, the MARIA member will supply the router and firewall for Business Internet Connections.*

13. Attachment 5, Pricing Workbook, shows three Multipoint Circuit Groups, please provide more detail on the service. Does MARIA seek SD-WAN services to meet this requirement?
*The requested service is Layer 2 Ethernet connectivity between all endpoints within a specific group. Each endpoint is able to communicate directly with every other member of the group. Firms are encouraged to also propose other solutions they feel would be more effective for MARIA.*

14. When delivering the services for Multipoint Groups A, B, and C, can this be done from the same CPE using a single hand-off? This would potentially reduce costs.
*The sharing CPE across the groups is acceptable but individual handoffs are required. As with all services, Firms are encouraged to also propose other solutions they feel would be more effective for MARIA.*

15. Is a Firm required to provide pricing for all circuits within a Multipoint Group?
*Yes, Firms must respond with pricing for all circuits within a multipoint group. Firms are not required to propose pricing for all multipoint groups.*

16. If a Firm has ideas for better ways to meet the needs of MARIA, how are these solutions proposed?
*Section III.8, Other Goods and Services provides a path for a Firm to propose alternative and additional services. Clearly describe both the service and its pricing, if appropriate, when responding to this section of the RFP.*

17. How does a Firm propose pricing for alternative solutions? Should the Attachment 5, Pricing Worksheet be edited to include additional rows and/or columns?
*The only edit a Firm may make to the pricing worksheet is to enter cost figures into green shaded cells. Firms may not add rows or columns or otherwise modify the worksheet. If you need to clarify any pricing, include such clarification in your main response, keyed to the Item Number in the first column of the spreadsheet.*

18. How will my Firm be notified that our Proposal has been successfully received?
*Section VI.D of the RFP provides additional details on this topic. Firms are notified via email when their proposal is received and again once MARIA has verified that it is able to read all of the submitted materials.*

19. Are we expecting all documents to be embedded in main Word Proposal document?
*Firms may either embed materials into the Word document or attach separate files to their email submission. Firms attaching separate files should clearly and succinctly describe each email attachment in the body of their message. If file sizes are too large for email, a Firm may provide a download URL instead. Section VI.D, Proposal Deadline, contains information on the format and submission of proposals.*

20. What are the deadlines for delivery of circuits?
    *The timing for circuit orders and activation will be discussed during negotiations. MARIA members operate on independent schedules. Attachment 4, Initial Service Needs, provides some additional clarity on MARIA member needs. Note that multiple spreadsheet rows often help to evaluate different possibilities for the same path and that each of these solution possibilities may have differing time expectations.*

21. What are the Terms for each of the circuits?
    *The circuit terms vary by service type and are listed in the fifth column of Attachment 5, Worksheet 1, Pricing Workbook.*

22. Do we require circuit diversity between MARIA Members?
    *There are no special requirements for diversity between MARIA members. Firms may use the same physical facilities to provision services to one or more MARIA members. Background: MARIA operates points of presence in Ashburn, VA and Atlanta, GA. MARIA members procure or operate network services to reach one or both of these points of presence in order to participate on the MARIA network. MARIA members choose the level of redundancy they need, trading off cost for additional resiliency.*