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Planning

NCC741 WAN Replacement Project, Northumberland — Future Opportunity

Northumberland County Council

F01: Prior information notice

Prior information only

Notice identifier: 2022/S 000-000601

Procurement identifier (OCID): ocids-h6vhtk-0308f1

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Section I: Contracting authority

I.1) Name and addresses

Northumberland County Council

County Hall

Morpeth

NE61 2EF

Contact

Mr David Hart

Email

david.hart@northumberland.gov.uk

Country

United Kingdom

NUTS code

UKC21 - Northumberland

Internet address(es)

Main address

<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk>

Buyer's address

<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk>

I.3) Communication

Additional information can be obtained from the above-mentioned address

I.4) Type of the contracting authority

Regional or local authority

I.5) Main activity

General public services

Section II: Object

II.1) Scope of the procurement

II.1.1) Title

NCC741 WAN Replacement Project, Northumberland — Future Opportunity

Reference number

DN590478

II.1.2) Main CPV code

- 72720000 - Wide area network services

II.1.3) Type of contract

Services

II.1.4) Short description

Northumberland County Council are seeking to engage with suppliers to participate in the tender process for the replacement of the Councils current Wide Area network.

II.1.6) Information about lots

This contract is divided into lots: No

II.2) Description

II.2.3) Place of performance

NUTS codes

- UKC21 - Northumberland

II.2.4) Description of the procurement

The Council are looking to procure a new Wide Area Network to replace their existing service. This procurement has the following key objectives, which underpin the delivery of the Councils Digital Strategy:

- Platform: Provide an economical infrastructure that is resilient, reliable, efficient, up to date and high performing. We will have a stable and secure platform on which we can rapidly deliver and iterate our digital services.
- Workplace: All staff can work effectively from anywhere, using a fast and reliable network to access data and applications hosted in private datacentres, private cloud and public cloud environments.
- Growth: Use technology to support the economic growth of the region in terms of business, tourism and digital skills. We will have outstanding digital infrastructure and connectivity to support the ambitions of residents, business, community and voluntary sectors.
- Resident-centred: Unlock or accelerate gigabit capable fibre connectivity to residential properties and communities that may otherwise not have access to fibre at all, or if it comes to them it will be at the very end of a lengthy programme.
- Education: Provide schools and educational settings with high speed, low cost connectivity, to support the delivery of high quality digital learning.

The Councils current Wide Area Network is provided through BT Enterprise – Public Sector. The contract commenced in September 2015 and was for an original term of five years with the option to extend for an additional two years. The option to extend for two years was taken in 2020 and therefore the current contract now expires in September 2022.

The current Wide Area Network contract with BT includes the provision of a Multiprotocol Layer Switched (MPLS) network running across Openreach's fibre network, covering approximately 300 sites including some schools, Academies, Corporate buildings, and buildings shared with Northumbria Health care. Current speeds (prior to the recent LFFN project) range between 10Mbps and 1Gbps (Connection to main headquarters County Hall in Morpeth is 10Gbps). These circuits are due to be upgraded as part of the Councils/BDUK Local Full Fibre Network project using Openreach's Full Fibre Infrastructure Build product with most sites moving to at least 100Mbps circuits.

There are several additional services not included in the current WAN contract with BT, but NCC are keen to see included in the scope of this project These include:

- The connectivity to Stockton and Darlington Datacentres. It is the Councils intention to move the infrastructure from Stockton and Darlington data centres to the Cloud by March 2024 (Stockton by July 2022). As these routes serve the Councils current Data Centres, they are resilient links split between suppliers and include:
 - o BT(via Pulsant) 1Gbps and 10Gbps connections
 - o Virgin(Via Pulsant) 1Gbps and 10Gbps connections

- The Council also has use of Dark Fibre from County Hall in Morpeth to Databanx in Newcastle. This is currently managed by GTT.
- Pulsant provide the Councils Internet connection this will also be included.
- The Councils Schools Internet connections are provided by Durham County Council and these connections will also be included in the scope of the project. This includes:
 - o The connection from Darlington to Durham
 - o The Schools Internet feed.

The current annual cost for all the above circuits is approximately £1.3m per annum.

II.2.14) Additional information

The Council are currently developing requirements for this project and there is likely to be an engagement event for suppliers.

Any event will provide further information on the procurement process and details of the vision and objectives of the Council's IT Service. In addition we anticipate that there would be an opportunity for attendees to raise questions.

If you would be interested in attending any such event, or if you require more information, please email: david.hart@northumberland.gov.uk.

Please note, expressions of interest in a supplier engagement event must be received by no later than 28 February 2022 by 5:00 p.m.

II.3) Estimated date of publication of contract notice

18 March 2022

Section IV. Procedure

IV.1) Description

IV.1.8) Information about the Government Procurement Agreement (GPA)

The procurement is covered by the Government Procurement Agreement: Yes

Section VI. Complementary information

VI.3) Additional information

The Council are particularly interested in achieving the following through the procurement of a new Wide Area Network

- Leverage the improved capacity of the Local Full Fibre Deployment, providing bandwidth increases and reduced cost on some of our sites.
- Whilst the Local Full Fibre Network project has delivered significant improvement in the speed of connection to the Councils properties its impact on other residential and business premises has been disappointing. The Council would like to use the opportunity of replacing its WAN to improve the provision of fibre to the property across Northumberland.
- Consolidation of all Wide Area connectivity into a single contract (site connections, internet, datacentre).

Approach

The Council is seeking to award to a single supplier. However, the Council accepts that this supplier may sub-contract delivery of parts of the network to other suppliers.

The Council expects that there will be a significant emphasis placed on the social value element of the tender in evaluation and scoring, to support the delivery of enhanced connectivity to residences in Northumberland.

The Council is considering a longer contract duration of up to 20 years, and is open-minded regarding capital v revenue funding if a Dark Fibre/Anchor Tenancy approach best supports their objectives, as long as the proposal is commercially viable and achieves best value for money. If this approach is preferred, it is likely to take some time to implement. Suppliers will need to explain how they would manage the transition from the existing environment to a new network where possible avoiding doubling cost and enabling the Council to meet its LFFN obligations.

The Council has no desire to run the network themselves, or own any fibre infrastructure, and will be looking for a supplier to provide the WAN as an end-to-end managed service.