

**PIERCE COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM
E-RATE BEN 145283
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)**

Title	Quote Due Date
2026 Internet & WAN Services for Hard-Wired and Wi-Fi Populations	Wednesday, September 10, 2025 at 5 p.m. Pacific Time

Submit bids and direct questions to:

Contact: Claire O’Flaherty, Consultant, E-Rate Expertise, Inc.
Phone: (253) 320-0664
Email: claire@erateexpertise.com

SCOPE

The Pierce County Library System (“Library”) seeks internet and WAN connectivity service at its Administrative Center and its eighteen (18) Library branches. For security purposes, under the current architecture the Library has two distinct physical internet connections for Wi-Fi and hard-wired user populations.

Internet access for hard-wired computers is currently provided via a single ten (10) Gbps fiber connection from the service provider to the Administrative Center and the traffic then travels to the branches via one (1) Gbps fiber WAN connections with a hub and spoke architecture. The fiber WAN connections between the hub and the branches also provide data connections for the branches to the main Library network infrastructure and services. These connections must continue to be robust and reliable, and the circuits must have the same upload and download speeds. A Service Level Agreement (SLA) with 99.99% uptime is required for service to this population.

Internet access for the Wi-Fi user population is currently provided separately by one (1) Gbps direct cable internet connections from the service provider to each branch building. These connections are required to be totally separate from the physical lines for the hub and spoke network serving the hard-wired population to ensure network security. They are not required to have the same upload and download speeds and may or may not have an SLA. The Library will choose the most cost-effective circuit type using current technologies that meet the demands and reliability requirements for this service.

The attached bid format spreadsheet gives details for the existing circuit types and speeds at the branches in the Library. Bidders are not required to bid on service to both the hard-wired and Wi-Fi populations, but preference will be given to vendors that can provide service to the most branches for each population. Since segmentation and separation of the hard-wired and Wi-Fi populations is required for network security, the Library requires that bids include two distinct physical connections with one dedicated to each population.

The anticipated circuit speeds in 2026 are as follows:

- WAN circuit at the Administration Center: ten (10) Gbps
- Branch-to-Hub WAN circuits: one (1) Gbps
- Hub Internet connection for hard-wired population: ten (10) Gbps
- Internet connections at branches for Wi-Fi population: one (1) Gbps

Over the life of this contract, the potential speed range for both Internet and WAN circuits—serving both wired and wireless populations—may vary from anticipated speeds in 2026 up to fifty (50) Gbps.

Please refer to the Library Internet and WAN bid format spreadsheet for details on current circuits and requested speed quotes. Bids must include pricing for all speeds listed in the attached bid format. Vendors are encouraged to include additional scalable options if available.

The current Sumner Library is currently located at 1116 Fryar Ave., Sumner, WA 98390, but construction will begin shortly for a new building at 15216 Main Street E, Sumner, WA 98390 that is expected to open in the first half of 2027. In addition, the Interim Lakewood Library is currently located at 10202 Gravelly Lake Drive SW, Lakewood, WA 98499 and could be moved sometime during the service contract with the selected vendor. These changes will be relocations and will not add to the total number of branches in the system. The Library will work with the winning vendor to determine the costs of the various options under consideration. The contracts would be amended to address the associated one-time and ongoing costs of branch relocations.

The Library is also exploring the possibility of adding new kiosk type patron services including library material pickup services and public internet access. The general areas under consideration are Orting, South Prairie, Carbonado and Wilkeson, but no addresses have been determined. Service could be added to these locations via amendment to the contract if the Library proceeds with this program.

The Library will not consider either generic or auto-generated bids and will disqualify bids that are not specifically created in response to this RFP.

BID FORMAT AND REQUIREMENTS

I. Requirements and questions for bids for direct internet service to Wi-Fi population

1. This service must be provided over a separate line and must also have static I/P.
2. In addition to the bid format spreadsheet, please provide a description of the construction and installation requirements, if any, before service can begin.
3. All proposed equipment must be current-generation, fully supported by the manufacturer, and not designated as End-of-Life (EOL) or End-of-Support (EOS) at the time of installation. The winning bidder must be an authorized reseller or partner and must provide installation, configuration, and ongoing support for all equipment. Equipment must be covered by a valid manufacturer warranty and ongoing technical support for a minimum of five years or the expected service life, whichever is greater.
 - a. Provide the make/model (or equivalent) and End of Life date for the equipment you use for the connection to each Library location.

II. Requirements and Questions for bids for hub & spoke service to hard-wired population

(a) RESILIENCY

The proposed solution must ensure continuous network availability for both Wide Area Network (WAN) services and Dedicated Internet Access (DIA) by incorporating multiple independent communication paths or circuits. These paths must be architected to avoid single points of failure and maintain consistent network performance and uptime, even in the face of link degradation, circuit outages, or equipment failures. The design should emphasize resilience and seamless failover in the provider's own existing network infrastructure to preserve service continuity to the Library under adverse conditions.

Solutions must reflect capabilities that are already deployed, managed, and supported by the provider—not reliant on future buildouts, speculative improvements, or third-party infrastructure unless explicitly disclosed. If any portion of the proposed solution requires new construction, network expansion, or other build-out activities, the provider must identify those elements and provide an estimated completion timeline as part of their proposal. The proposal should clearly demonstrate how the provider's network architecture fulfills each requirement as a standard part of their service offering, or how and when it will be capable of doing so.

Vendors must describe how their design ensures uninterrupted connectivity, particularly during network disruptions. Proposals should detail specific mechanisms such as failover routing, load balancing, and dual-homed configurations that enable their network to continue functioning in the event of failures or performance degradation.

For WAN connectivity, respondents must explain how inter-site communication is preserved during service-impacting events. This should include the use of secondary circuits, diverse routing paths, or alternate infrastructure pathways that ensure continuity between sites.

For dedicated internet access (DIA), the solution must support sustained inbound and outbound traffic even if the primary service path on the vendor's network is disrupted. Respondents should describe

the use of alternate third-party providers, multiple upstream connections, and geographically diverse points of presence (PoPs) that support continuous external connectivity.

If the proposed solution involves third-party carriers or other infrastructure partners, their roles and dependencies must be clearly identified. Responses must include details on any existing SLAs, escalation paths for outage resolution, and how continuity of service is maintained across those partnerships.

Preference will be given to proposals that demonstrate a resilient network architecture capable of maintaining service levels during infrastructure disruptions. Solutions should show evidence of high availability for both internal (WAN) and external (DIA) connectivity, supported by physically or logically separate infrastructure paths.

Proposals will be evaluated based on:

- The ability to maintain network service under adverse conditions
- The extent to which the design avoids single points of failure
- Alignment with enterprise-grade availability expectations
- Demonstration of robust design practices across WAN and DIA services

As part of the response, vendors must answer the following:

1. Describe the resilience of your network and backhaul line, including any failover mechanisms currently in place.
2. If a failover solution is not yet implemented, provide your plan and timeline for developing one.
3. Identify where the primary backhaul line is physically located and how far it is from Pierce County

(b) UPTIME

The proposal must include an SLA, that contains a description of the services provided and how these services will be measured. At a minimum, an SLA should describe that the vendor will make all reasonable efforts to ensure 99.99% network availability of each circuit and meet industry leading line quality standards. Additionally, the SLA should describe 24x7x365 trouble-reporting procedures, offer commitments regarding the time to repair outages, and describe provisions offered in the event of chronic trouble. The services described in the SLA shall be maintained to the specifications of these commitments throughout the term of the contract, and the selected vendor shall remediate any deficiencies at no cost to the Library. Additional features, such as DDoS protection, should also be described. Round the clock service is important because patrons access the Library remotely and other Library business, such as system updates and data transfers, occur overnight.

As part of the response, vendors must answer the following:

4. What is your average SLA rate of uptime for your system?
5. What is average SLA rate for your subscribers in the PCLS operating area?
6. What is your policy and process for compensating your customers for lost connection time? This policy and policy should be part of the SLA.

(c) ISSUE RESOLUTION AND RESPONSE TIME

The Library expects full communication from vendors throughout any period of service outage. The Library prioritizes vendors who demonstrate the capability to lead and provide high touch communications in the event of service outages.

As part of the response, vendors must answer the following:

7. What are your SLA response times in the event of an outage for the subscribers in the Library's operating and network areas?
8. What is your process for communicating with customers when there is an outage that is identified by your company and by the customer? Explain the metrics in place to measure your response times.
9. What process do you use to keep customers updated between the time that an outage is identified and when it is restored?
10. Does the vendor offer a portal that provides real time updates of lines states, outages, service requests and communication? If yes, please explain the information provided to the customer in this portal.
11. If you lease the lines, what are the SLA response time agreements with those vendors?
12. What is your process for communicating with customers when there is an outage that is identified by the line owner or third-party provider?

(d) OWNERSHIP

The Library is willing to work with vendors who are both direct line owners and those who resell under a lease agreement. Accordingly, the Library requires full disclosure of these third-party relationships where they exist as well as definition of the specific service standards in these agreements. Adherence to the agreed upon SLA for both the internet and WAN connections is required.

13. Make sure that you indicate whether you lease or own the lines to each branch on your bid format spreadsheet.
14. If you lease the lines, please provide the name of the line owners and describe the quality of the relationship you have with them and how long you have worked together.

(e) TRANSITION/CONSTRUCTION

If your bid includes special construction as defined by E-rate, please provide a description of the scope of the project and the required timeline. The E-Rate definition of Special Construction is as follows: "For the purposes of the E-Rate program, special construction charges are the upfront, non-recurring costs of deploying new or upgraded network facilities to E-Rate eligible entities. Special construction consists of three components: (1) Construction of network facilities, (2) Design and engineering and (3) Project management. Special construction does not include charges for Network Equipment, i.e., modulating electronics and other equipment necessary to make a Category One service functional." Billing won't commence until the system is 100% installed and configured. Exceptions to this requirement can be made via mutual agreement and amendment to the contract.

15. Describe the process for transitioning to the closest demarcation point.
16. What is the level of effort required to connect the PCLS branches to your network?

(f) EQUIPMENT

All proposed equipment must be current-generation, fully supported by the manufacturer, and not designated as End-of-Life (EOL) or End-of-Support (EOS) at the time of installation. The winning bidder must be an authorized reseller or partner and must provide installation, configuration, and ongoing support for all equipment. Equipment must be covered by a valid manufacturer warranty and ongoing technical support for a minimum of five years or the expected service life, whichever is greater.

17. Provide the make and model (or equivalent) and End of Life date for the equipment you use for the connection to each Library location.
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III. General Requirements

18. Submit a copy of your standard contract with terms for service, including a Service Order. This RFP, and the completed bid spreadsheet with vendor's costs become addendums to the contract. If all terms and conditions of the vendor's standard contract and service order are acceptable to the Library, the contract may be signed by the Library for E-rate submittal purposes.
19. Bids should include an example of the monthly billing statement that includes all estimated costs, taxes and fees for different levels of service at each location. Billing shall be monthly, net thirty (30) days.
20. Non-recurring charges, set-up or installation fees (if any) should be included.
21. Provide qualifications and experience of the dedicated project manager for implementation and customer service.
22. Bids may include up to three (3) reference sites where your company has performed a similar service, including business name, contact name and contact information. The Library may use its prior experience with a vendor as a reference. It is preferable that at least one reference should be for a Library or school district of similar size within 200 miles of Library.

IV. Bid Format Spreadsheet and Instructions

Bids must be submitted in the format outlined in the uploaded bid format spreadsheet on the 470 form and must include costs for all speeds listed on the spreadsheet. See 2026 PCLS Category 1 Internet WAN Bid Spreadsheet.xls for details. Vendors do not have to bid on service to both the hard-wired and Wi-Fi populations. However, preference will be given to vendors who can serve the population they are bidding on at the greatest number of locations.

1. List your company name and SPIN number. Enter the Contract Term length. Please provide separate bid sheets with costs for BOTH 3-year and 5-year contracts. Are you current on your SPAC/473 requirements? How many years of experience do you have working with the E-rate program?
2. Fill in the circuit type you are proposing. The Bid Format Spreadsheet indicates the current circuit types, but bids with other proposed circuit types will also be evaluated for affordability and cost-effective solutions to meet Library system demands. Indicate your current maximum speed for your circuit types.
3. The Library seeks costs for speeds from one (1) Gbps to fifty (50) Gbps. Please fill in the cost for each speed listed in the spreadsheet. Other speeds may be added if available. The minimum acceptable speed in a bid is one (1) Gbps for all circuits. A complete listing of available speeds and costs within the range in the scope of this RFP will be included in the contract with the selected vendor. If all prices are not available at this time, prices for higher speeds may be added via an amendment to the contract. Please provide an estimate for the potential new kiosks with the understanding that the prices may need to be adjusted once the addresses are determined.
4. Itemize any nonrecurring, set-up, or installation fees.
5. List any applicable taxes and fees, including network access fees, regulatory fees, surcharges, etc., for these services. A percentage (%) of monthly recurring cost (MRC) estimate is acceptable.
6. Indicate if the lines have already been built and give the GUARANTEED service availability date.
7. Indicate if your company owns or leases the lines for the service you are proposing.
8. Indicate if Static IP is available and the cost/line.

CONTRACT TERMS AND CONDITIONS

1. **Start Date:** The Library seeks a guaranteed start date of July 1, 2026 for all services. The new contract is expected to be signed in Fall 2025, and vendors will have until February 15, 2026 to notify the Library if any locations cannot be activated by July 1, 2026. This notification will allow the Library to pursue alternative E-Rate funding for those locations or consider postponing implementation to the following program year. These changes would be made via amendment to the contract.
2. **Term:** The Library seeks either a three (3) year or five (5) year contract with the option to automatically extend for one (1) annual renewal period at the same rate. The contract would revert to a month-to-month arrangement at the same prices after the completion of the original term and extension. The Library will consider other contract periods if they resulted in lower pricing. If the market supports a price reduction after the initial term, the Library will exercise price reduction options, if any are available, as an amendment to the original contract.
3. **Non-Appropriation of Funds:** The contract may be canceled, renegotiated, or not renewed in the event of loss of federal E-rate, state or Library funds.
4. **Service Changes as Amendments:** Within the scope of this RFP and the signed contract, the Library may seek to increase speeds, change circuit types, add lines, or add service to an existing or new branch through change orders/contract amendments with the selected vendor to meet future system needs and to ensure cost effectiveness of the service. These changes may be the result of the need for greater capacity, greater cost effectiveness, expiration of existing contracts, new branch openings or other circumstances. If different services are phased in during the contract term, the original contract termination date will remain the same.
5. **Activation:** Vendors shall notify Library in writing upon completion of installation of all required circuits. Library shall have up to two weeks to reconfigure their systems and test that the services are functioning properly and will notify vendor in writing of their acceptance of the service. Billing will commence upon the completion of installation of service to all branches and the Library's acceptance of the service. Exceptions to this requirement can be made via mutual agreement and amendment to the contract.
6. **Service Level Agreement:** A mutually agreed upon SLA may be included in the contract.
7. **E-Rate SPIN and Billing:** All bidders must have a current SPIN number and be eligible and certified by USAC to deliver telecommunications services and/or Internet Access during the life of the contract. Failure to maintain this status could result in contract termination. Vendors must be willing to do either SPI or BEAR methods of reimbursement.
8. **Secure Networks Act:** Library will not accept any equipment or services produced, provided by or containing parts, from any company, including parents, affiliates, or subsidiaries thereof, that the FCC has designated as a national security threat to the integrity of communications networks or the communications supply chain pursuant to 47 CFR 54.9(a). A list of covered communications equipment and services can be found on the FCC's website at <https://www.fcc.gov/supplychain/coveredlist>. The list will be updated as necessary, and proposers have the responsibility to check for updates and to ensure that all products and services in quotes and final contracts are compliant.
9. **Taxing District and Library Information:** The Library is a junior taxing district under the laws of the State of Washington established in 1946 as a rural Library district under Chapter 27.12 RCW. The Library provides library services for the residents of unincorporated Pierce County, fifteen (15) annexed cities and towns, including Bonney Lake, Buckley, DuPont, Eatonville, Edgewood, Fife, Gig Harbor, Lakewood, Milton, Orting, South Prairie, Steilacoom, Sumner, University Place, and Wilkeson. The total estimated population served is 680,000. More information about the Library may be found online at www.mypcls.org.
10. **Terminology:** This RFP uses the word "proposal" and "proposer" et al, consistent with the use of a Request for Proposal conducted in a public entity procurement process. USAC terminology for competitive E-rate process for procurements may use words such as "bid" and "bidders". As such, without discrimination to terminology used by either the Library or USAC, the word "proposal" and any derivatives are to be considered the same as USAC's usage of the word "bid" and any derivatives. All other typical words used in procurement processes, such as "submission", "response", and "vendor" are considered materially similar as used between the Library and USAC.

BID PROCESS, EVALUATION, AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Bidding Process Information

1. The submission date and time are listed above. The submission period may be extended at the Library's discretion.
2. The Library reserves the right to request additional information and/or a Best and Final Offer (BAFO) during this bidding process as responses are compared and evaluated.
3. The Library reserves the right to reject all proposals and cancel this project at any time.
4. Responders are required to read and understand all information contained within this entire RFP package. Submitting a bid constitutes complete understanding and compliance with the terms and conditions in this RFP.

Evaluation Criteria for Selecting the Winning Bid

Proposals will be judged on the following criteria:

1. 30 Points Price - Least cost for the capacity and reliability that meets the Library's needs (most heavily weighted criteria)
2. 25 Points Capacity and reliability of proposed service meets Library's needs
3. 15 Points Local, in-state or regional vendor with the ability to serve the Wi-Fi or Hard-wired populations at the most locations while providing the most comprehensive and cost-effective services that meet the Library's needs
4. 15 Points Completeness, quality, and reliability of the proposal
5. 15 Points Prior positive experience with the vendor/positive reports from references

The bids for Wi-Fi and Hard-Wired populations will be evaluated separately and winners will be selected accordingly. If the winning vendor cannot provide service to all locations or populations, then a separate contract for the missing locations or populations may be awarded to another vendor in accordance with the above criteria.

Disqualifying Factors:

The Library will not consider either generic or auto-generated bids and will disqualify bids that are not specifically created in response to this RFP.

Contact, Submittal & Misc. Information:

1. **The proposal submission date and time are listed above. If the submission period is extended, an RFP update will be posted on the federal E-Rate EPC 470 form and on the PCLS website noted below.**
2. Questions regarding the RFP should be submitted in writing to Claire Christnacht at claire@erateexpertise.com within fourteen (14) days after the E-rate 470 form has been issued. Answers will be posted on the Library's website and on the E-rate 470 form within five (5) business days after the deadline for submitting questions.

3. Proposals should be submitted via email to Claire Christnacht, claire@erateexpertise.com and to PCLSITPurchasing@piercecountyLibrary.org
4. All RFP documents, including instructions, proposal formats, Q&A, updates, etc. will be uploaded to the original E-Rate 470 form and will also be posted on the Library's website at <https://mypcls.org/get-involved/partner-with-us/>
5. For Library branch addresses, please see <https://mypcls.org/visit-the-Library/locations-hours/>