

RFP Issuance Due Date: August 30, 2024

Proposal Submission Due Date: September 20, 2024

Anticipated Start Date: Oct 1, 2024

SUBJECT: Request for Proposals (RFP) for LINC IT Assessment

LINC LLC (“LINC”) is seeking proposals from qualified organizations interested in providing the services described in the attached Request for Proposals (RFP).

The purpose of this Request for Proposal (“RFP”) is to invite qualified Individuals or organizations to submit a proposal for providing **Assessment and Recommendation for improvement on LINC IT system, infrastructure and security**] outlined more fully in Sections III and IV.

LINC intends to issue a Time and Materials subcontract, with an estimated value of \$10,000 to suitable vendors who demonstrate that they have the capacity to deliver quality technical assistance and are the most responsive to the requirements of the RFP.

The remainder of this RFP provides additional information that will allow an offeror to understand the scope of the effort and develop a proposal in the format desired by LINC.

Issuance of this RFP does not constitute an award commitment on the part of LINC. LINC reserves the right to reject any offer received in response to this request. LINC shall not be liable for any costs incurred by Offeror in the preparation and submission of proposal.

The information presented in this RFP is furnished solely for the purpose of assisting the offeror in making its own evaluation of the Scope of Work and does not purport to be all-inclusive or to contain all the information you may require. This RFP is not an offer by LINC to contract, but rather an attempt to establish a common framework for LINC to evaluate potential suppliers. The offeror should make its own investigations, projections and conclusions to verify independently the information contained in this RFP, and to obtain any additional information that it may require, prior to submitting a proposal.

All questions, comments, requests for clarifications must be sent in writing to kdossinger@linlocal.org no later than the date and time indicated above. Questions will not be entertained after this date.

If substantive questions are received which affect the response to the solicitation or if changes are made to the closing date and time as well as other aspects of the RFP, this solicitation will be amended.

Thank you for your interest and we look forward to your participation.

Sincerely,

Katie Dossinger, CFO

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Statement of Work (SOW)

I. Background

LINC has experienced significant growth, both in its Washington, DC headquarters and in the project offices it supports globally. LINC operates in multiple countries in Africa, Latin America, Eastern Europe and Asia. The organization has approximately 70 full time employees based in multiple countries, including the United States, Ghana, Ethiopia, Kosovo, Kenya, Mexico and Honduras. LINC also uses independent contractors who work remotely from different parts of the world.

LINC's technology platforms are primarily Microsoft based, with SharePoint, Teams and Outlook most frequently utilized. LINC's largest client, USAID, operates Google platforms, meaning LINC personnel must manage communications and information in multiple systems that do not integrate effectively. LINC currently receives IT support from a consultant in eastern Europe, who has strengths in network management.

To accommodate growth in the US and in overseas project offices and to adequately secure corporate communications and data, LINC's leadership team have identified the need to select an IT partner to help assess the existing IT environment to make recommendations to improve IT policies, hardware support, data management and systems security.

II. Objectives

LINC is now seeking a realistic assessment and recommendation for improvement in the short, medium and long term to improve its IT infrastructure and security measures considering the evolving challenges in technology risks and cyberthreats. LINC would require assessment and recommendations on the following areas:

1. Electronic systems usage and access (infrastructure)
2. Cyber security
3. IT support service operations
4. Business continuity and disaster recovery
5. Organizational Staffing
6. IT policy compliance

III. Activities and Tasks

The following method can be employed:

- a) Technical Audits: Comprehensive review of all hardware and software components.
- b) Performance Analysis: Monitoring and analyzing system performance to identify inefficiencies.
- c) User Surveys and Interviews: Gathering feedback from the end-users to understand practical challenges and needs.
- d) Compliance and Security Audits: Ensuring that systems adhere to legal and industry standards and are secured against threats.

IV. Deliverables

1) IT service operations:

Service Operation is to coordinate and carry out the activities and processes required to deliver and manage services at agreed levels to Users. Service Operation is also responsible for the ongoing management of the technology that is used to deliver and support services. Well-designed and well-implemented processes to ensure expected service level operations.

IT Service Operations may include:

- Hardware / Software Inventory
- Logging all relevant incident/service request details
- Providing first-line investigation and diagnosis
- Resolving those incidents/service requests as they are able
- Escalating incidents/service requests that they cannot resolve within agreed timescales
- Keeping Users informed of progress
- Closing all resolved incidents, requests and other calls
- Conducting customer/User satisfaction callbacks/surveys as agreed
- Communication with Users – keeping them informed of incident progress, notifying them of impending changes or agreed outages, etc.
- Communication with Users – keeping them informed of incident progress, notifying them of impending changes or agreed outages, etc.

2. Data Storage and Recovery

We expect a complete analysis on current practices, and a strategy using best practices to ensure Data can be recovered for business continuity and regulatory compliance

3. Network Assessment / Security

Conduct a review of the existing IT security plan and the state of cybersecurity across LINC's systems overall. Review current server security implementations, fraud prevention measures, vulnerability to cyberattacks or security breaches, staff alertness to phishing and scams, etc. Make recommendations for improvement.

3. Compliance

Ensure compliance with current laws, regulations and guidelines where applicable.

- Compliance with Cybersecurity and Privacy Laws and Regulations as per NIST [Compliance with Cybersecurity and Privacy Laws and Regulations | NIST](#)
- Comply with requirements for confidentiality, integrity and availability for LINC's employees and other authorized Users.

4. Risk Management

- Ensure flexibility and an acceptable level of security for accessing information systems from the external network of LINC.
- Establish controls for protecting LINC's information and information systems against theft, abuse and other forms of harm and loss.
- Motivate administrators and employees to maintain the responsibility for, ownership of and knowledge about information security, in order to minimize the risk of security incidents.
- Ensure that LINC is capable of continuing its services even if major security incidents occur.
- Ensure the protection of personal data (privacy).
- Ensure the availability and reliability of the network infrastructure and the services supplied and operated by LINC/or third party.
- Ensure that external service providers comply with LINC's information security needs and requirements.

5. Staffing

Review and make recommendations on optimal staffing and/or outsourced services for LINC's current and future needs.

6. Help Desk / Support Services

Review and suggest improvements to LINC's current processes for providing support to users, ticketing system, etc.

7. Platforms and Software

Review LINC's current platform and software configurations. Take a particular look at current Sharepoint functionality, interoperability improvements between Google-based domains and Microsoft based domains, User maintenance (for both staff and consultants), implementation of groups, etc.

8. Electronic systems usage and access (infrastructure)

The responsibilities of users of IT resources of LINC; end user computing policy. IT or the IT resources includes all of the LINC-owned and/or hired information processing equipment (including portable equipment and mobile facilities), computers, laptops, printers, application systems, software, network

equipment, facilities, electronic and digital storage media, as well as data and information contained therein.

Recommendation on monitoring system resources, including activity and accounts when:

- it is necessary to protect the integrity, security, or functionality of LINC IT resources
- an account or system is engaged in unusual or excessive activity
- it has good cause to believe that the rules and regulations outlined are being violated.

How should the regular operation and maintenance of LINC IT resources requires the backup of data, the logging of activity, the monitoring of general usage patterns and other such activities.

In addition, recommendations on:

- LINC's specifications for hardware and various configurations Protection of IT Facilities
- Account Usage
- Use of Email and Internet

Employee's Responsibility to protect LINC's System from Viruses

V. Duration and Location

Duration: : Six Weeks

Location: : Washington, DC Headquarters (remote)

Submission Information

VI. Submission Information

This section contains general and specific requirements for submitting the technical and cost proposals. Please ensure completed forms, along with a copy of your legal registration, are included with the technical proposal otherwise your proposal may be rejected.

1. The Offeror is requested to submit a proposal directly responsive to the terms, conditions and clauses of this RFP. The overall proposal shall consist of two (2) physically separated parts: Technical Proposal and Cost Proposal. Alternative proposals will not be considered. Proposals not conforming to this solicitation may be categorized as unacceptable and eliminated from further consideration.

Offerors are allowed to submit one proposal. If an Offeror participates in more than one proposal, all proposals involving the Offeror will be rejected.

2. Proposals shall be written in English. Cost proposals shall be presented in USD.
3. Proposals must remain valid for a minimum of six weeks during this project's duration The Offeror may submit its proposal by the following means:

Electronically – Email with attachments compatible with a MS Windows environment to:
RFP@lincllocal.org

4. The person signing the Offeror's proposal must have the authority to commit the Offeror to all the provisions of the Offeror's proposal.
5. The Offeror should submit its best proposal initially. LINC reserves the right to conduct discussions should LINC deem it necessary.
6. Proposals must be clearly and concisely written and must describe and define the Offeror's understanding and compliance with the requirements contained in the STATEMENT OF WORK. All pages must be sequentially numbered and identified with the name of the Offeror and the RFP number.

PART A: TECHNICAL PROPOSAL

The technical proposal shall be straightforward and concise, outlining in sequence, how the Offeror intends to carry out the technical requirements under each main activity. No contractual price information is to be included in the Offeror's implementation work plan in order that it will be evaluated strictly on its technical merit.

1. Organizational Information:

- Organization's legal name
- Contact name and position or title
- Organization's E-mail address, physical address and telephone number

2. To effectively evaluate the current state of IT systems, the following methods can be employed:

- a. Technical Audits: Comprehensive review of all hardware and software components.
- b. Performance Analysis: Monitoring and analyzing system performance to identify inefficiencies.
- c. User Surveys and Interviews: Gathering feedback from the end-users to understand practical challenges and needs.
- d. Compliance and Security Audits: Ensuring that systems adhere to legal and industry standards and are secured against threats.

3. Capability Statement: A narrative – not to exceed two (2) pages – that explains the Firm's capability to perform the scope of work, activities & tasks and deliverables. The Offeror will demonstrate it has the necessary organizational systems and procedures (e.g., personnel policies, travel policies, project management, equipment, supplies and personnel) in place to successfully comply with the contract requirements and to accomplish the expected results. It will demonstrate it has the in-house resources eg. personnel, to provide the required services. A description of relevant personnel training and qualifications, including CVs for key individuals, where applicable. CVs are not included in the 3-page length limit.

4. **Past Performance:** Not to exceed two (2) pages, the Offeror will submit a list of current and past similar work and assignments completed in the past five years that were similar in size, scope and complexity – preferably in areas listed in the SOW – with particular attention paid to those performed in US.
5. **References:** References from a minimum of two (2) clients worked with in the past two years on activities similar to this scope of work. Include the contact information: company or organization, name, phone number and email.
6. **Personnel/Staffing:** Not to exceed two (2) pages, the Offeror will identify, in summary format of 2-3 sentences, the names, anticipated positions of the key team leaders and essential personnel proposed to perform the requirements of this scope of work, activities & tasks and deliverables. The narrative will include the percentage of staff time of principals and managers on this activity. CVs (not to exceed two (2) pages) that clearly describe education, experience and professional credentials and biodata forms will be completed and attached for the proposed personnel. These pages do not count toward the page limitation for this section.

PART B: COST PROPOSAL

The Offeror will propose costs it believes are realistic and reasonable for the work in accordance with the Offeror's technical approach. The Offeror shall provide a budget based on cost elements described below.

The detailed cost proposal will include the following:

- a. Proposed staff, commercial hourly rates and number of hours needed to accomplish the work
- b. Related materials and supplies

Provide in the Budget Narrative section, a concise description and justification for each line item cost. Be sure to include data and/or methodologies to support cost estimates. The cost proposal must align with the technical volume in order to be deemed realistic and reasonable.

The Budget Narrative shall be presented in such a way as to be easily referenced from the budget and should provide sufficient information so that LINC may review the proposed budget for reasonableness and realism.

All projected costs must be in accordance with the organization's standard practices and policies.

Offers including budget information determined to be unreasonable, unrealistic, incomplete and/or unnecessary for the completion of the proposed project or based on a methodology that is not adequately supported may be deemed unacceptable.

Guidelines:

1. Cost proposals from Offerors shall be presented in USD.
2. Offer must be inclusive of any applicable taxes.

VII. Evaluation Criteria

LINC will select the offeror whose proposal represents the best overall value to LINC. Offerors who do not follow the instructions in this RFP may be disqualified from consideration.

VIII. General Terms and Conditions

1. TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Offerors are responsible for review of the terms and conditions described.

2. CONTRACT MECHANISM

LINC is anticipated to award a Time and Materials Contract to the Offeror whose proposal will be evaluated based on the evaluation criteria described previously. Based on the merits of the offers received, LINC reserves the right to award more than one subcontract.

3. WITHDRAWALS OF PROPOSALS

Offerors may withdraw proposals by written notice via email received at any time before award. Proposals may be withdrawn in person by a vendor or his/her authorized representative if the representative's identity is made known and if the representative signs a receipt for the proposal before award.

4. RIGHT TO SELECT/REJECT

LINC reserves the right to select and negotiate with those firms it determines, in its sole discretion, to be qualified for competitive proposals and to terminate negotiations without incurring any liability. LINC also reserves the right to reject any or all proposals received without explanation.

5. DISCLAIMER

This RFP represents only a definition of requirements. It is merely an invitation for submission of proposals and does not legally obligate LINC to accept any of the submitted proposals in whole or in part, nor is LINC obligated to select the lowest priced proposal. LINC reserves the right to negotiate with any or all firms, but with respect to price, costs and/or scope of services. LINC has no contractual obligations with any firms based upon issuance of this RFP. It is not an offer to contract. Only the execution of a written contract shall obligate LINC in accordance with the terms and conditions contained in such contract.

6. OFFER VERIFICATION

LINC may contact Offerors to confirm contact person, address, bid amount and that the bid was submitted for this solicitation.

7. FALSE STATEMENTS IN OFFER

Offerors must provide full, accurate and complete information as required by this solicitation and its attachments.

8. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Offerors must provide disclosure of any past, present or future relationships with any parties associated with the issuance, review or management of this solicitation and anticipated award in or outside of the country of performance.

Failure to provide full and open disclosure may result in LINC having to reevaluate selection of a potential vendor.

9. RESERVED RIGHTS

LINC reserves the right in its sole discretion to:

- Disqualify any offer based on Offeror failure to follow solicitation instructions.
- Waive any deviations by vendors from the requirements of this solicitation that in LINC's opinion are considered not to be material defects requiring rejection or disqualification, or where such a waiver will promote increased competition.
- Extend the time for submission of all RFP responses after notification to all vendors.
- Terminate or modify the RFP process at any time and reissue the RFP to whomever LINC deems appropriate.
- Issue an award based on the initial evaluation of Offerors without discussion.
- Award only part of the activities in the solicitation or issue multiple awards based on solicitation activities.
- Not compensate Offerors for preparation of their response to this RFP.
- Not guarantee that LINC will award a subcontract based upon the issuing of this RFP.
- Award a subcontract to more than one Offeror for specific parts of the activities in the RFP.