Department of Procurement
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
45 W. Gude Drive, Suite 3100
Rockville, Maryland 20850

September 25, 2025

NOTICE TO RESPONDENTS

**The following are questions and responses regarding
MO26-47001-Core Routers Switches - Form_470_Application _260000923**

Question 1: **Is there a preferred Make and Model number for the Cisco Switches or equivalent?**
   a. port number requirement?
   b. PoE requirement?
   c. Are Transceiver modules required such as SFP, SFP+ or QSFPs or the option for them to be added?
   d. Power Redundancy?

Answer 1: Please refer to MO26-47001-Core Routers Switches–260000923, Section 2: Intent
   a. It is the vendor's responsibility to scope the number of ports required to support the environment based on the number of locations, 15 rows in data center and aggregate devices for connectivity.
   b. N/A
   c. Yes
   d. Yes

Question 2: **Is there a preferred Make and model number for the Cisco Routers or equivalent?**
   a. Is there a bandwidth requirement?
   b. Power Redundancy?

Answer 2: Please refer to MO26-47001-Core Routers Switches–260000923, Section 2: Intent
   a. Please refer to MO26-47001-Core Routers Switches–260000923, Section 2: Intent
   b. Please refer to MO26-47001-Core Routers Switches–260000923, Section 2: Intent

Question 3: **N9K-C9348GC-FX3 only supports up to 1G over copper (RJ-45). Please confirm if any of the RJ-45 based switches will need to support 10G over copper, and if so how many?**

Answer 3: It is the vendor's responsibility to demonstrate that this solution is compatible with the MCPS infrastructure.

Question 4: **Please confirm how many Fabric Extenders (FEX) switches are needed at the DR site. Additionally, will these need to support 1G and/or 10G speeds over copper?**

Answer 4: Please refer to MO26-47001-Core Routers Switches–260000923, Section 2: Intent. It is the vendor's responsibility to demonstrate that this solution is compatible with the MCPS infrastructure.

Question 5: **Architecture & Port Density**

    a. Please confirm the leaf–spine wiring model (dual-homed leaves to two spines; any exceptions per row?).

    b. Required uplink speeds and counts per leaf and per spine (e.g., 2×100G vs 4×100G vs 400G; target ECMP width).

    c. Expected server/row downlink mix per leaf (10G vs 25G; copper vs fiber; typical port counts per row).

    d. MACsec scope—uplinks only or all access ports?

    e. Timing scope—PTP/SyncE required at which tiers, and boundary vs transparent clock?

    f. Multicast expectations (e.g., EVPN multicast, PIM/IGMP modes).

    g. Preferred cabling/breakouts (100G→4×25G, 400G→4×100G) by row/rack.

Answer 5: **Architecture & Port Density**

    a. MCPS is seeking vendor recommended solutions and vendors need to respond with what they can do.

    b. MCPS is seeking vendor recommended solutions and vendors need to respond with what they can do.

    c. MCPS is seeking vendor recommended solutions and vendors need to respond with what they can do.

    d. MCPS is seeking vendor recommended solutions and vendors need to respond with what they can do.

    e. MCPS is seeking vendor recommended solutions and vendors need to respond with what they can do.

    f. MCPS is seeking vendor recommended solutions and vendors need to respond with what they can do.

    g. MCPS is seeking vendor recommended solutions and vendors need to respond with what they can do.

Question 6: **DC ↔ DR Connectivity**

    a. What is the transport between primary DC and DR: dark fiber/L2 extension, DWDM, or WAN/MPLS at 100 Gbps?

    b. Is a Layer-2 stretch required?

    c. Required bandwidth, redundancy model (active/active ECMP?), and any latency/jitter targets across DCI.

    d. Desired failover behavior (active/active vs active/standby; RTO/RPO guidance).

    e. Routing policy between sites (eBGP vs OSPF, route filtering, default vs full tables).

    f. Security on the DCI (MACsec/IPsec requirements, keying/automation expectations).

Answer 6: **DC ↔ DR Connectivity**

    a. MCPS is seeking vendor recommended solutions and vendors need to respond with what they can do.

    b. MCPS is seeking vendor recommended solutions and vendors need to respond with what they can do.

    c. MCPS is seeking vendor recommended solutions and vendors need to respond with what they can do.

    d. MCPS is seeking vendor recommended solutions and vendors need to respond with what they can do.

e. MCPS is seeking vendor recommended solutions and vendors need to respond with what they can do.

f. MCPS is seeking vendor recommended solutions and vendors need to respond with what they can do.

Question 7   **Routing Scale (Edge/WAN)**
   a. Will MCPS require support for full Internet BGP tables at the edge (≈1.2M IPv4 + 200k IPv6), or will the carrier provide default/select prefixes with policy-based eBGP/OSPF as referenced?

Answer 7:   **Routing Scale (Edge/WAN)**
   a. Out of scope for RFP **MO26-47001-Core Routers Switches–260000923**

Question 8   **Hardware Roles & Quantities**
   a. For the ~15 rows (≈4 switches/row), should we assume a uniform leaf count per row, or are there rows with higher/lower density?

Answer 8:   **Hardware Roles & Quantities**
   a. Both-higher and lower

Question 9   **Section 3.2 - Leaf Layer Requirements**
   a. Could you please **confirm how many switches are required with SFP+/QSFP+/QSFP28 ports** versus **how many with Ethernet (RJ-45) ports?**

Answer 9:   **Section 3.2 - Leaf Layer Requirements**
   a. MCPS is seeking vendor recommended solutions and vendors need to respond with what they can do.

Question 10   **Section 3.3 - Fabric Features & Capabilities**
   a. What is the **current link capacity of the MPLS circuits,** and do you anticipate an increase in capacity in the near future?

Answer 10:   **Section 3.3 - Fabric Features & Capabilities**
   a. Firewall and MPLS edge integration with 100G WAN/MPLS handoff

Question 11   **Section 3.4-Automation & Manageability**
   a. Are you open to the use of **cloud-based controllers** for fabric management and telemetry instead of solely on-premises solutions?

Answer 11   **Section 3.4-Automation & Manageability**
   a. Yes

Question 12:   **Section 3.6 Experience & References:**
   a. Is submitting experience/references with MCPS and in education/K-12 environments is a mandatory requirement?
   b. Can firm submit experience with other sectors like SLED [healthcare and other] or FED other than MCPS and education/K-12 environments?
   c. Can we submit experience/references from our proposed subcontractor?
   d. Are commercial experience/reference permitted?
   e. Can Case studies or examples be other than from regional school districts?

Answer 12: Section 3.6 Experience & References:
   a. no
   b. yes
   c. yes
   d. yes
   e. yes

Question 13: Section 4 - Implementation & Support
   a. How many **VDCs (Virtual Device Contexts)** are currently deployed in the existing Cisco Nexus 7009 switches?
Answer 13: Section 4 - Implementation & Support
   a. 3

Question 14: Section 6 - Pricing Structure
   a. Could you please clarify **how many ports are required per router?**
   b. Will the agency be adding pricing worksheets or firm are required to create their own?
Answer 14: Section 6 - Pricing Structure
   a. It is the vendor's responsibility to demonstrate that this solution is compatible with the MCPS infrastructure.
   b. Respondents are required to create their own pricing structure.

Question 15: Attachment A MCPS General Contract Articles
ARTICLE 22. INDEMNIFICATION AND LIABILITY, Point D states *"The Contractor expressly understands and agrees that any performance bond or insurance protection 16 required by the Contract, or othe1wise provided by the Contractor, shall in no way limit its responsibility under the Contract to defend, indemnify, and hold harmless MCPS"*
   a. Could the agency clarify if there any performance bond or insurance protection applicable to this solicitation? if yes please provide details.
   b. ARTICLE 23. INSURANCE: Are firm required to provide any proof of insurance with the bid?
   c. Attachment A: ARTICLE 23. INSURANCE: Is it a post-award requirement?
Answer 15. Attachment A MCPS General Contract Articles
   a. There are no performance bond or insurance protection applicable to this solicitation.
   b. This is a post-award requirement.
   c. This is a post-award requirement.

Question 16: **What is the required number of spine and leaf switches at the Primary Data Center and the DR site? Will this be a one-to-one replacement, or different qty? If additional/lesser, please specify quantities.**
Answer 16: It is the vendor's responsibility to demonstrate that this solution is compatible with the MCPS infrastructure.

Question 17: How many fiber leaf switches needed per DC , how many should be 1/10/25G ports and how many should be 40/100G ports

Answer 17: It is the vendor's responsibility to demonstrate that this solution is compatible with the MCPS infrastructure.

Question 18: How many copper leaf switches needed per DC which are 1/10G copper ports.

Answer 18: It is the vendor's responsibility to demonstrate that this solution is compatible with the MCPS infrastructure.

Question 19: What type of Inter-DC (IDC) connectivity is in place between the Primary and DR sites (dark fiber, customer-owned fiber, or service provider circuit)?

Answer 19: MPLS & Service provider

Question 20: What is the provisioned bandwidth of the Inter-DC link, and how many links exist between the two DC's?

Answer 20: up to 100G

Question 21: What type of WAN connectivity is used to connect schools to the Data Center?

Answer 21: MPLS

Question 22: Are the Nexus 7000 switches currently serving as the campus core, or are they dedicated to the Data Center core?

Answer 22: Both

Question 23: Is there a separate campus core switching infrastructure?

Answer 23: Yes

Question 24: Section 2 ("The purpose of this RFP is to procure and implement a next-generation, high-performance, resilient, and scalable leaf–spine data center architecture.")
   a. To ensure we propose an approach and pricing model aligned with MCPS's objectives, can MCPS clarify its primary goals for this initiative (e.g., lifecycle replacement of aging hardware, adoption of new fabric capabilities such as ACI and automation, increased bandwidth for future workloads, improved DR resiliency)?

Answer 24: **Section 2**
   a. lifecycle replacement of aging hardware, adoption of new fabric capabilities, automation and improved DR resiliency.

Question 25: Section 2 ("The solution will replace our existing Nexus 7000-series chassis environment...") and Section 2 ("The proposed solution must integrate seamlessly with, or provide migration paths from, this installed base.")
   a. The RFP states that the intent is to replace the existing environment, but also that the proposed solution may "integrate seamlessly" with the installed base. Can

MCPS clarify whether the expectation is full replacement of all Nexus 7000 chassis and 9300-EX/TC-EX switches with GX/FX models, or if proposals that incorporate some existing hardware will be considered?

Answer 25: **Section 2**
   a. MCPS is seeking vendor recommended solutions and vendors need to respond with what they can do.

Question 26: **Section 3.5 ("Licensing (renewable annually); One-year basic maintenance (renewable annually), with clear terms for extended support") and Section 6 ("Total cost of ownership including optics, licenses, and support 1-year; 3-year; 5-year")**
   a. The RFP requests pricing for 1-, 3-, and 5-year total cost of ownership, and also specifies licensing and maintenance "renewable annually." Would MCPS be amenable to proposals that include multi-year license/maintenance terms in addition to annual renewals, if these result in lower overall TCO?

Answer 26: **Section 3.5 and Section 6**
   a. Yes

Question 27: **Section 2 ("The DR site consists of a single row, with the following equipment deployed: ... The proposed solution must ensure full compatibility between the primary data center and the disaster recovery site...")**
   a. The RFP states that the proposed solution must ensure full compatibility and failover between the primary data center and the DR site. Will the vendor be upgrading the DR site as well, or is the intent is to retain the existing DR hardware and only ensure interoperability?

Answer 27: **Section 2**
   a. MCPS is seeking vendor recommended solutions and vendors need to respond with what they can do.

Question 28: **Section 2 ("Our current environment consists of... 14 Nexus 93180YC-EX and 42 Nexus 93108TC-EX...") and Section 3.1 ("GX-class spine/core switches... 400G, 100G, and 40G port support")**
   a. To ensure accurate pricing and alignment across vendors, can MCPS provide either a detailed bill of materials (BOM) or specific requirements for the new environment, including the exact number of switches, expected port densities, uplink and downlink speeds (to spine and to servers/storage), and the required mix of port types (1/10/25/40/100/400G) for both the primary data center and DR site?

Answer 28: **Section 2 and Section 3.1**
   a. No, MCPS will not be providing a detailed BOM.

Question 29: **Section 3.3 ("Logical segmentation via VRFs (NXOS) or Tenants/EPGs (ACI)") and Section 4 ("Implementation services: configuration, testing, and migration...")**
   a. In addition to hardware specifications, can MCPS clarify its expectations for fabric architecture and operations? Specifically, should vendors assume APIC controller redundancy, a multi-site or multi-pod design, and collection of specific types of telemetry/monitoring data?

Answer 29:   **Section 3.3 and Section 4**
    a. MCPS is seeking vendor recommended solutions and vendors need to respond with what they can do.

Question 30:   **Section 3.3 ("Logical segmentation via VRFs (NXOS) or Tenants/EPGs (ACI)") The RFP allows for both NX-OS and ACI, but repeatedly uses ACI-oriented terminology such as "leaf–spine" and APIC.**
    a. Can MCPS confirm whether ACI is the expected operating model, or should vendors propose either NX-OS or ACI based on best fit?
    b. Can MCPS confirm that the current environment is operating in NX-OS mode rather than ACI?
    c. Assuming NX-OS-to-ACI migration is required, should vendors plan for a direct migration of existing segmentation constructs, or is the expectation that we evaluate and recommend new tenant/EPG/contract policies as part of the design?

Answer 30:   **Section 3.3**
    a. MCPS is seeking vendor recommended solutions and vendors need to respond with what they can do.
    b. NX-OS mode
    c. MCPS is seeking vendor recommended solutions and vendors need to respond with what they can do.

Question 31:   **Section 3.3 ("Logical segmentation via VRFs (NXOS) or Tenants/EPGs (ACI)")**
    a. Can MCPS clarify its plans for virtualization in the new deployment? Specifically, is Virtual Machine Manager (VMM) integration expected, what percentage of hosts are currently bare metal versus virtual, and should vendors assume Cisco UCS or other platforms (e.g., Nutanix) for server infrastructure?

Answer 31:   **Section 3.3**
    a. MCPS is seeking to move towards virtualization and vendors need to recommend solutions and respond with what they can do.

Question 32:   **Section 3.5 ("Vendor must provide itemized part/model/SKU numbers with E-Rate eligibility percentages") and Section 6 ("Vendor must provide itemized part/model/SKU number... to provide the E-Rate eligibility percentage")**
    a. Can MCPS clarify whether E-rate eligibility percentages should be presented at the line-item level only, or if vendors must also provide aggregate calculations in the format used for USAC Form 471 submissions?

Answer 32:   **Section 3.5 and Section 6**
    a. E-rate eligibility percentages can be presented at the line-item level

Question 33:   **Section 4 ("Migration from Nexus 7009 VDCs to leaf–spine VRFs")**
    a. Can MCPS provide a diagram of the current Nexus 7000 environment (including VDC layout and switch interconnections) to support accurate design and hardware placement recommendations in the proposed 9000-series fabric?

Answer 33:   **Section 4**
    a. Yes, at the time of award.

Question 34: Section 4 ("Implementation services: configuration, testing, and migration")
   a. Can MCPS clarify whether it will provide smart hands support (e.g., racking, stacking, and cabling), or if the awarded vendor is expected to perform these physical installation tasks in addition to configuration, testing, and migration?

Answer 34: Section 4
   a. MCPS is seeking vendor recommended solutions and vendors need to respond with what they can do.

Question 35: Section 4 ("Knowledge transfer and training for district staff")
   a. The RFP does not define the format, audience, or duration for knowledge transfer and training. Does MCPS have specific requirements, or should vendors propose the approach we believe best meets the district's needs?

Answer 35: Section 4
   a. MCPS is seeking vendor recommended solutions and vendors need to respond with what they can do.

Question 36: Section 4 (No support mentioned other than vendor support contracts such as SmartNet) and Section 6 ("Ongoing support")
   a. Can MCPS clarify whether the selected vendor will be responsible for ongoing post-deployment support after the initial standup? If so, what is the expected scope of this support (e.g., operating, troubleshooting, maintaining the environment, staffing levels, hours of coverage, on-site vs. remote, and response/resolution SLAs)?

Answer 36: Section 4
   a. Yes, the selected vendor will be expected to provide post-deployment support. This includes, but is not limited to, remote troubleshooting, configuration assistance, firmware guidance, and coordination with hardware/software vendors for escalations. On-site support may be required for critical outages or pre-scheduled cutovers. Vendors should clearly define the scope of included support, SLA commitments, and available support tiers (e.g., 8x5, 24x7), and whether any staffing (dedicated or shared) will be provided as part of the engagement.

Question 37: Section 5 ("Low-level design (LLD) and migration plan...Configuration templates... Test/validation plan...Documentation of firewall and MPLS integration")
   a. Does MCPS have documentation standards or templates that vendors will be required to follow for documentation deliverables, or should vendors propose the format and level of detail we believe best meet the district's needs?

Answer 37: Section 5
   a. MCPS is seeking vendor recommended solutions and vendors need to respond with what they can do.

Question 38: Section 6 ("4 routers and 60 switches")
   a. The RFP pricing structure specifies "4 routers" in addition to the switches but no details are provided about existing router models or desired capacity requirements. Can MCPS clarify the intended function of these routers (e.g., WAN/MPLS edge, firewall adjacency, aggregation) and the expected specifications (port count/types, bandwidth, redundancy)?

Answer 38: **Section 6**
   a. It is the vendor's responsibility to demonstrate that this solution is compatible with the MCPS infrastructure.

Question 39: **Section 6 ("Complete cost breakdown per-appliance..., maintenance, and any additional services")**
   a. Can MCPS clarify whether vendors are expected to supply all necessary cabling (e.g., fiber, copper patch cords, DACs), or if MCPS will provide cables separately? If vendors need to supply cabling, can you provide guidance such as expected cable types, lengths, and quantities per location?

Answer 39: **Section 6**
   a. It is the vendor's responsibility to demonstrate that this solution is compatible with the MCPS infrastructure.

Question 40: **Section 6 ("Complete cost breakdown per-appliance..., maintenance, and any additional services")**
   a. Are Small Form-Factor Pluggable (SFP) transceivers required to be included as part of the hardware procurement, and if so, can MCPS provide guidance on the types, speeds, and quantities expected?

Answer 40: **Section 6**
   a. It is the vendor's responsibility to demonstrate that this solution is compatible with the MCPS infrastructure.

Question 41: **Section 6 ("Separate lines for: Initial setup; Ongoing support; Training")**
   Section 7 ("Initial term: 5 years; Renewal options: Up to 5 additional 1-year extensions")
   a. The RFP requests pricing for initial setup and ongoing support, with a 5-year base term. Should vendors assume that Year 1 includes initial setup plus a partial year of ongoing support, or should we propose a full 5-year support term beginning after setup?

Answer 41: **Section 6 and Section 7**
   a. MCPS is seeking vendor recommended solutions and vendors need to respond with what they can do.

Question 42: **Section 7 ("MCPS reserves the right to extend this contract at existing prices, terms and conditions for up to five (5) additional one-year terms.")**
   a. MCPS reserves the right to exercise option years at "existing prices." Can vendors propose option year pricing with defined escalation, or must option years be priced at the same rates as the initial term?

Answer 42: **Section 7**
   a. MCPS is seeking vendor recommended solutions and vendors need to respond with what they can do.

Question 43: **Section 10 ("Proposed timeline for delivery, setup, and deployment for July 1, 2026") Section 14 ("Proposals Due: October 23, 2025...Anticipated Award Date: December 11, 2025 Board of Education Meeting")**

a. The RFP specifies an Award Date of December 11, 2025 and completion date of July 1, 2026. Can vendors assume immediate authorization to proceed after award, or should we plan for a later notice-to proceed date for the start of work?

Answer 43: **Section 10**

a. The effective date of the awarded contract will be July 1, 2026. Delivery, setup and start of work will occur after the effective date of the awarded contract.

Question 44: **Section 13 ("It is the intention to award this contract to the vendor(s) submitting the most favorable unit prices...Different vendors may be selected... MCPS reserves the right to add vendors throughout the contract term...")**

a. Much of the RFP (pricing structure, contract terms, evaluation criteria) reads as though MCPS intends to make a single firm-fixed-price award. However, Section 13 ("Awards") refers to unit prices, the possibility of selecting different vendors for different schools, and the option to add vendors over time, which suggests a BPA or IDIQ-style contract. Can MCPS clarify the intended award structure (single award FFP vs. multiple-award or IDIQ-type vehicle)?

Answer 44: **Section 13**

a. It is the intention to award this contract to a single vendor meeting the overall criteria. However, MCPS reserves the right to add vendors throughout the contract term.

Question 45: **Section 13 ("Cost will be the most heavily weighted criteria")**

a. Section 13 states that "Cost will be the most heavily weighted criteria" but does not provide weighting for technical vs. cost evaluation. Can MCPS clarify whether there are specific evaluation weightings (e.g., percentage allocations, order of importance, etc.)?

Answer 45: **Section 13**

a. Percentage allocations will be used with cost being the most heavily weighted criteria with consideration being given to any previous performance for MCPS as to quality and reliability of service, suitability, capabilities and manageability of devices, compatibility with the MCPS infrastructure, and with regard to the vendor(s) experience deploying leaf–spine with VXLANEVPN and migration methodology.

All responses to the Form 470 and RFP must be submitted electronically to Saudy_EspinalDeVeloz@mcpsmd.org no later than 2:00 p.m. Eastern time on October 23, 2025. The MCPS Procurement website address is www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/procurement/. Late proposals will not be considered.

_____

Saudy Espinal DeVeloz, Buyer II, Department of Procurement

Please indicate your acceptance of this notice by signing below and returning with your response to the Form 470 or under separate cover.

Accepted:

_____
Name and Title

_____
Company Name

Copy to:
  RFP File