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December 9, 2024

**Subject: Antelope Valley-East Kern (AVEK) Water Agency IT Managed Services RFQ pre-proposal questions and responses**

Prospective Firms –

The following is a list of questions and responses for the above-referenced RFQ. These shall become a part of the RFQ and be considered when preparing your proposal.

### Q1: Please provide the following information:

- **Number of supported end users.** All Agency employees, officers, and Board members. The total number of supported end users is 55.
- **Current ticketing system.** The Agency does not have an internal ticketing system. Our existing MSP utilizes ServiceNow to manage tickets that are generated via email or directly through the portal.
- **Number of Help Desk cases submitted each month.** Approximately 20 tickets per month are generated by our users for our existing MSP.
- **Number of Desktop/Laptops.** Total desktop/laptops is 73.
  - **Manufacturers.** 68 Dell, 4 Microsoft Surface laptops, and 1 HP desktop.
  - **Is software patching required? If so, please list/name the programs that will be included.** Software patching is required. The selected firm should push critical Windows security updates in accordance with industry best practices to ensure the Agency's vulnerabilities are limited. Support for updates for all software programs utilized by the Agency is expected.
- **Qty and Manufacturer of supported network infrastructure.** 9 firewalls (primarily Sonicwall) and 22 switches (primarily Aruba & Cisco).
- **Qty and Manufacturer of Server infrastructure.** 2 servers, Dell.
- **Current SIEM provider/software.** We do not currently leverage SIEM.
- **Define procurement and provisioning expectations.** The procurement and provisioning bullet listed on pdf page 6 would require the selected firm to provide quotes to the Agency for new computers, switches, server hardware, and other devices to be purchased by the selected firm on behalf of the Agency. The devices can be shipped directly to the Agency or to the selected firm depending on the method of provisioning. The cost for these devices would be paid separately from the monthly services by the Agency. Provisioning services for these devices is expected to be

included in the monthly services pricing and is expected to consist of all set up necessary to use the device.

A1: Answers are inserted after each bulleted item above in non-bold text.

**Q2: In the RFQ document page 26, Attachment B is blank. Please confirm that this is purposeful or please provide the information that was intended to be there.**

A2: Attachment B is part of the sample Professional Services Agreement and is intended to be blank for this RFQ. The selected Firm's proposal will be inserted as Attachment B upon execution of the PSA.

**Q3: The Firm's response to this RFQ will be for IT professional services only. Please confirm that this means that Exhibit C is not relevant to our response, since section 1720 of the California Labor Code defines "Public Works" as follows:**

***(1) Construction, alteration, demolition, installation, or repair work done under contract and paid for in whole or in part out of public funds, except work done directly by a public utility company pursuant to order of the Public Utilities Commission or other public authority.***

A3: Confirmed. This contract will be for professional services and not Public Works. Section C will be omitted from the final PSA.

**Q4: Specialized Software & IT Systems:**

- **Do you have third-party support for your specialized software applications (VOIP, Crestron A/V, CCTV)? If so, could you provide details on the level and nature of that support?** The VOIP system is vendor supported. Crestron A/V and CCTV have no current third-party support agreements. As stated in Section 3.0 Background and Technical Environment of the RFQ "the selected Firm is expected to serve as the Agency's representative when working with software vendors for installation or troubleshooting of all software applications".
- **Is the current VOIP system supported by your MSP or another vendor? What level of support does the current provider offer?** The current VOIP system is vendor supported. Consistent with our current MSP's services, the selected firm is expected to assist Agency staff with troubleshooting with the vendor.
- **Do you have an established relationship with Crestron for your A/V system?** The Agency does not have an established relationship with Creston.
- **How are your security camera systems currently supported, and what is the relationship between your IT team and the vendors?** Our security camera systems are primarily supported through in-house personnel. We expect the selected firm to assist staff with vendor-supported installations, updates, and troubleshooting.

A4: Answers are inserted after each bulleted item above in non-bold text.

**Q5: Scope of Services:**

- **How is your IT currently supported? Are you able to provide ticket history, ticket counts or hours of support?** See response to Q1 for ticket counts. Support services and hours for our current MSP may differ from the requirements of this RFQ.

- **What is the expected timeline for the onboarding process, specifically the initial review of network configurations, server setups, and hardware inventory? Are there any specific security protocols or compliance standards we should follow during this phase?** The Agency assumes the onboarding process will take 30 calendar days from the date of an executed contract. However, we will work with the selected vendor to develop an onboarding timeline that ensures a complete and thorough onboarding process. There are no specific security protocols or compliance standards to follow for this period.
- **Will the monthly visits be for each location or a specific site? Also, what access will we have to remote locations, such as treatment plants and water banks?** The monthly visit will most frequently be to the Quartz Hill location. Visits to the other sites will occur on an as-needed basis if hands-on support is needed. These visits will be in lieu of the monthly visit to the Quartz Hill location. All facilities are manned during working hours. Local staff will provide access.
- **Can you please clarify the expectations for the annual IT presentation to the Board of Directors (BoD)? What reporting format and key performance indicators (KPIs) would be most helpful for the Board?** Agency staff will work with the selected Firm to develop an approximately twenty-minute slide deck presentation for the Board of Directors. During this presentation, the Firm is expected to provide an update on the Agency's IT infrastructure. Highlights are expected to include number of cases resolved, new implementation of major hardware or software, major updates or changes to software and network capabilities, update on efficacy of implemented security measures, and recommendations for future improvement to optimize operations and enhance cybersecurity.

A5: Answers are inserted after each bulleted item above in non-bold text.

**Q6: Five-Year IT Plan & Budgeting:**

- **Do you have a current five-year IT roadmap? Are there any specific technology or business objectives you would like prioritized in the plan?** The Agency does not have a developed five-year IT roadmap. We will work together with the selected Firm to identify needs and establish priorities to include in the roadmap.
- **Are there any specific budget constraints or guidelines we should consider during the initial assessment and plan development?** There are no specific budget constraints or guidelines that need to be discussed at this point. AVEK will work closely with the selected Firm to develop an acceptable five-year budget.

A6: Answers are inserted after each bulleted item above in non-bold text.

**Q7: Monthly & Annual Services:**

- **Do you require quarterly infrastructure reviews and cybersecurity training for employees and the BoD? If so, what has worked well in the past for these reviews, and are there any special events or presentations we should be aware of?** Quarterly infrastructure reviews and cybersecurity training are not currently conducted. AVEK will work with the successful Firm to develop the

annual training stated in Section 4.0 Scope of Services of the RFQ. No special events are anticipated other than the annual presentation for the Board of Directors referenced in the RFQ.

- **Which cybersecurity frameworks are you aiming to comply with, and how are they applied across the agency?** The Agency will work closely with the successful Firm to maintain current or adopt a new cybersecurity framework that meets the Agency needs.
- **What is your current backup and disaster recovery strategy? Are there existing tools or processes you want to maintain, or are you open to new solutions?** Due to the sensitivity of this information, more information will be shared with the awarded firm. However, the Agency is always open to new solutions and suggestions.

A7: Answers are inserted after each bulleted item in non-bold text.

#### **Q8: Support & Service Levels:**

- **What are your expectations for 24/7 support for executive and management employees? How are critical issues escalated outside of normal business hours?** Expected 24/7 support is described in Section 4.2, second bullet point: *“Prioritized and expedited support for designated executive and management level employees (up to 10 users) with 24x7x365 support and maximum 1 hour response times.”*

This question is unclear with regard to how critical issues are escalated outside of normal business hours.

- **Which metrics (CPU utilization, bandwidth, uptime, etc.) does AVEK prioritize for 24/7 monitoring? Are there any existing monitoring tools in place?** Server health (CPU utilization, hard disk status) is prioritized for 24/7 monitoring. Existing monitoring tools are deployed by our MSP. The selected Firm should install necessary software for monitoring.
- **Can you provide more information about your current cybersecurity tools and protocols? What specific cybersecurity challenges has AVEK faced?** AVEK utilizes standard firewalls, anti-spyware and anti-malware software. There are no specific cybersecurity challenges. Due to the sensitivity of this information, more detailed information will be shared with the selected firm.

A8: Answers are inserted after each bulleted item above in non-bold text.

#### **Q9: Network Security & Infrastructure:**

- **Can you describe the current network segmentation within AVEK’s infrastructure, particularly for critical systems like SCADA or sensitive data applications? Are there specific security zones to maintain or enhance?** Due to the sensitivity of this information, AVEK’s current network segmentation can only be shared with the selected Firm.
- **Are there any areas or systems in particular that should be focused on during penetration testing? Would you like to include vulnerability assessments for all seven locations, including remote sites?** There are no specific areas to be focused on during penetration testing. The Agency expects an overall assessment from the selected firm.

A9: Answers are inserted after each bulleted item above in non-bold text.

#### **Q10: Procurement & Vendor Management:**

- **How does AVEK approach technology procurement? To what extent should the MSP be involved in recommending or procuring new hardware or software? Are there preferred vendors or contracts we need to align with?**

A10: Refer to answer A1 for details. The Agency does not have a preferred vendor nor any specific contracts for the successful Firm to be aligned with.

#### **Q11: Miscellaneous:**

- **How does AVEK define success in this partnership? Are there certain KPIs or SLAs you expect the MSP to meet consistently?** There are no specific KPIs or SLAs we intend to use to gauge success. AVEK is seeking a relationship with the MSP Firm whereby the Firm acts as an extension of Agency staff. The ideal Firm will have AVEK's best interest in mind and work collaboratively with Agency staff to continuously improve the IT environment.
- **Are there any non-technical services (like employee training) that you expect the MSP to provide beyond the scope outlined in this RFQ?** No additional services are expected beyond what was included in the RFQ.
- **Which date is correct for the Notice of Award? The one in the intro section (January) or the one under section 6.4 (February)?** Section 2.0 is incorrect. The Notice of Award is expected by February 28.
- **Do any of the smaller well sites or turnouts have IT equipment that the firm would be responsible for supporting?** No, but the successful Firm is expected to provide support to SCADA vendors for troubleshooting.
- **What are the expectations regarding onsite support at treatment sites? (Would 4WD vehicles be necessary for access to any locations?)** See Q5, bullet 3. All facilities are accessible with regular vehicles via paved roads.
- **With server management included in the scope of outsourced services, how many virtual machines are currently part of the environment?** Two virtual machines in the current environment.
- **Do any sites connect to the SCADA system, particularly remote locations, using LTE connectivity?** No.
- **Is LIMS (Laboratory Information Management System) support in place?** Yes, LIMS is vendor supported and there is a contract in place.
- **When is the annual budget finalized? (Additionally, does the Agency work with any grants or special funding programs?)** The Agency annual budget is typically finalized in June and adopted by the Board of Directors in August. No grants or special funding will be used for IT services.
- **Is there a budget allocated for the five-year plan to enhance network devices, configurations, cybersecurity tools and practices, and disaster recovery?** See Q6, bullet 2.
- **Is Sage50 currently hosted on an internal server or operated online?** Sage50 is currently hosted on an internal server.
- **Does the Agency currently have support in place for AutoDesk software?** No support in place for AutoDesk.
- **What additional licenses does the current IT provider offer as part of their services?** No additional licenses are offered by the current IT provider.

- **Are any additional vendors providing IT-related support to the agency beyond the current scope? If so, what specific areas do they cover?** No additional vendors, other than VOIP, SCADA, LIMS and printer hardware.

A11: Answers are inserted after each bulleted item above in non-bold text.

**All RFQ submissions are required to acknowledge receipt of this Addendum No. 01.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Justin Livesay", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Justin Livesay  
Engineering Manager