IT Support Tender ITT
Clarifications & Responses

Q. Are you able to supply an indication of how many third line tickets were logged from your IT team to the current supplier?

A. We don't have any formal reports to obtain these numbers from, but as an indication the IT team has only submitted 5 requests in the last 3 months. As a general rule the number of incident requests is low.

Q. Could you please confirm the amount of Microsoft 365 licences you have and if possible which types? i.e. Business/Standard or E3 etc.
What level M365 licencing are you using?

A. We have a mix of Microsoft 365 licenses. Currently, we have 90 365 Business Standard and 518 Office E2 licenses. This includes a number of legacy accounts which will not require support moving forwards and so this number will shrink. We would estimate there are around 250 active E2 licenses which brings us up to our circa 350 user base.
There are also a very small number of licenses for things like Project PowerBI and Dynamics.

Q. Can you advise if you are using Mac OS or windows operating systems?

A. We are using exclusively Windows operating systems.

Q. Are you using your free Azure credits?

A. Yes, we are currently on the free version of Azure.

Q. Could you confirm if this budget is per year or for the full 3-year term?

A. This budget is for the full 3-year term.

Q. Could you confirm how this figure has been calculated?

A. We took our existing costs for the existing agreement and adjusted for inflation and added some additional budget in to allow for increased levels of service.

Q. Could you confirm if you have an existing provider already providing this same level of service as requested in the tender specification for this budgeted amount?

A. We currently have an existing provider who are providing similar levels of service to what is being requested in the tender specification for under the budgeted amount. The specified requirements in this tender reflect a slight increase to the service levels that we currently have as we are also looking for strategy and infrastructure development advise and support.

Q. Could you confirm that if all the bids received are much higher than this budget amount then the award will still be made to the highest-scoring bidder as a Most Economically Advantageous Tender evaluation?

A. If all bids are significantly higher than the budgeted amount then we will likely need to review the budgeted amount and tender specification before adjusting and re-tendering as necessary. We will be unable to proceed with significantly higher bids as budget may not be available to support this.

IT Support Tender ITT
Clarifications & Responses

Q. Could you confirm that all the equipment listed in Section 5 – infrastructure is fully supported by the direct manufacturer extended hardware warranties and the dates that these currently run until.

A. Some of our devices are no longer in manufacturer warranty or extended warranty periods. A breakdown can be found below:

All HP Server hosts are in manufacturer warranties until 2025.
Dell EMC SAN is out of extended warranty in January 2023 and we are therefore looking to replace this.
Q-Logic SANbox' are out of warranty.
All Synology Rackstations are out of original manufacturer year warranty but the drives are covered until 2024.
Fortigate firewalls are in warranty and support is renewed for these yearly.
All Extreme switches are out of warranty but are being replaced with new Aruba units.
Backup QNAP NAS is out of warranty.
Backup QNAP SAN is out of warranty.

Q. Is this a 7 days a week or a 5 day a week?

A. 7 days a week cover.

Q. What hours of cover would you want?

A. Ideally 24/7 cover. Our core business hours are approximately 08:00-18:00 but 24 hour helpdesk cover would be ideal for emergencies monitoring and out-of-hour support where required.

Issue 2-

Q- Please can you provide details of your current cyber security systems and strategy
A- The NMRN does not have a separate cyber security strategy. The main NMRN IT strategy is available by request by emailing tenders@nmrn.org.uk
Currently, NMRN utilise a number of things for cyber security, including a SIEM tool, antivirus on all endpoints and servers, email filtering gateway, URL filtering service, MFA on all logins, internal firewalls and an external cloud firewall managed by the ISP.

Q-Please can you provide ticket details for the past 12 months, particularly those that would have been escalated to the support provider.
A-Unfortunately, we do not have this information.

Q-Would access to 3ʳᵈ line support be required by all 350 users? Or just the in-house IT Team (6)?
A-Access to 3ʳᵈ line support is only required by the in-house IT Team. Please refer to Annex A, sections 1 and 3 in the ITT document for more information.

Q- Is there manufacturer/vendor support on the current infrastructure hardware? (DL360 hosts, Dell SAN, Synologies, QNAPs, Fortigate firewalls and fibre channel switching)
A- Please refer to version 1 of the tender clarification questions.

Q- Which model of Fortigates are in use? Are any next gen/UTP features being used?
A-   Fortigate FW-100F with no UTP.

Q- What version of VMware is in use?

A-   We're currently using version 6.7

Q- What level of virtual machine support/management is required? Would it be support of the underlying infrastructure only, or would operating system support/patching/monitoring etc be in scope?

A-   Support will be required for the underlying infrastructure as well as OS level support. We currently aim to manage this in-house but then can request support from the MSP when necessary. We also have MSP monitoring in place on infrastructure and OS'.

Q- Please provide more information about the Citrix solution. How is it architected/managed, are there any current performance or availability issues, what level of support/management is required for Citrix?

A-   We currently have 2 HP hosts acting as Citrix session servers. We then also have 2 Citrix domain controllers, and a Citrix NetScaler server. The Citrix solution is currently managed by the MSP. As explained in Annex A, section 4 of the ITT document we are considering removing the Citrix environment as this no longer provides much value to the organisation.

Q- Is the backup infrastructure at the same site as the live environments? Where is the Veeam Cloud Connect repository?

A-   Currently the backup infrastructure is on the same site as the live environment. The cloud repository is with our current MSP.

Q- What current monitoring is in place?

A-   With our current MSP, we have monitoring in place for network equipment, servers and storage infrastructure to notify of any devices which appear down. We also have server OS monitoring for things like server status, disk usage and patching.

Q- What level of management/support is required for the Active Directory and Exchange services?

A-   We primarily manage this in-house but should the need ever arise for additional support as a result of issues or planned changes, we would potentially need some assistance.

Q- What's the cost of downtime?

A-   We do not have any formal data on this. However, if we had an outage which affected our ability to sell tickets to visitors during one of our busiest periods this is estimated to be up to £10,000 per hour in lost ticket sales.
There would be other implications such as time lost as a result of other employees not being able to do their job effectively.

Q- Who provides connectivity to the 9 x NMRN sites? And what is the current contract end date?

A-   We have an ISP in place that manages connectivity to all our sites but this is outside of the scope of this tender.

Q- Current biggest pain points?

A- We do not currently have any major 'pain points' and our infrastructure is healthy. However, there is likely to be some development and cleanup work we can do to make sure our IT systems are working to their full potential and ensure they are delivering appropriate, robust solutions for our organisation.

Q- Who is the current supplier of 3rd line support? How are these current suppliers performing against SLA?

A- We do not feel it is appropriate to disclose information about our current provider during this tender process.

Q- Examples of tickets raised in the last 3 months.

A- Unfortunately, we can only provide one example. This was for some assistance accessing our VMware infrastructure after a planned power outage to bring servers back online. The service didn't appear to come up correctly after devices were powered back on.
Our current ticketing system makes it difficult to report on previous tickets which is something we would like to improve.

Q- How do you evaluate new technologies?

A- The in-house IT team try to stay up-to-date with emerging technologies but we also rely on recommendations from our current MSP when discussing projects or problems and finding an appropriate solution. Introducing new technologies is usually a weigh up of cost vs reward. As a charitable organisation, cost and value for money is very important to us. Any technology we invest in needs to be able to deliver a reliable solution to achieve the desired outcome at a cost-effective price.

Q- How well does the business adapt to new technologies?

A- As with any organisation, there may be an adjustment period when making large-scale changes to the IT systems. On the whole though, new technologies are usually well received if they are going to improve efficiencies and make work easier for staff. The in-house IT team are always looking at ways we may be able to work better.

Q- What's holding the organisation back from reaching key strategic cloud points within the NMRN IT strategy within 2 years, over 5-7 years?

A- The organisation is still largely on-premise and is not ready for a complete jump to the cloud. We have some relatively new hardware in use which would be redundant if we moved to the cloud now, plus there are considerations to be made over whether a complete cloud solution would be the right thing for the organisation. Cost, time and resource are other major factors in this.

Q- Current biggest security threats/concerns?

A- Cyber security is a threat to any organisation. We do not have any concerns which outweigh the next. Instead, we are looking at ways we can continue to bolster our IT security to support the modern workplace.

Q- What would be the impact to the business if there were a security breach?

A- As with any organisation, a security breach could have big implications. This would depend on the nature of the breach but we are doing our best to mitigate any threats.

Q- How are IT investment requests approved?

A- IT investments are built into our yearly budgets and are reflective of corporate objectives. We would usually get an understanding of appropriate solutions and associated costs so that these can be planned into the subsequent years budget(s). Depending on the value of investment, we may need to take a particular procurement route when the project gets underway.

Q- Are there any regulatory/governance/compliance requirements that we need to consider?

A- Currently we are PCI compliant and will require to maintain this moving forwards. We are also considering working towards cyber essentials. We are also compliant with GDPR and our MSP will need to help us maintain this. The winning MSP will also need to ensure the safety of our company data which they may have access to in order to provide support. This may require a non-disclosure agreement.

Q- If possible, can you please provide us with some historical volumes/data regarding site visits, especially sites not in Portsmouth?

A- Our current MSP have not had to visit sites outside of Portsmouth for onsite support but this is a requirement for the tender as we may require onsite support at any site in the future. Onsite support at other sites had been necessary before all IT infrastructure was centralised in Portsmouth. However, with just basic network and end-user devices at other sites now, this is not a common occurrence. The in-house IT team travel to other sites when required to undertake work.

As a reference, the current MSP has only needed to attend site in Portsmouth twice within the last 18 months for assistance on project work.

Clarification Questions Final Deadline Monday 9th January 2023 at 1700 (5pm)

Submission Deadline is Thursday 19th January 2023 at Midday (1200)   to tenders@nmrn.org.uk