Overview
The 11 public school districts and 50 public charter schools in Marion County (by far Indiana’s most populous county) serve approximately 152,000 students and are interested in collectively procuring hotspot devices and a private e-learning network. The Indianapolis E-learning Fund -- acting in the best interest of and in collaboration with the school districts and charter schools -- will issue two RFPs: the first (below) seeking partners who could supply hotspot devices, the second (to be released May 1) seeking partners to supply/build and/or operate/maintain a private network for e-learning. The hope and expectation of the school districts and charter schools is that this collective purchase will result in earlier, higher-priority delivery; a more efficient and transparent process; lower cost and more efficient use of public funds; access to additional funding streams; and more uniform compatibility with the private network solution to come. This "Marion County E-Learning RFP #1" requests proposals for procurement of (15,000); (30,000); (50,000); (100,000); and (150,000) hotspots.

Mission
The Indianapolis E-Learning Fund Members (in collaboration with the Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation) is seeking to support Marion County public schools (traditional public and public charter) with addressing technical barriers that hinder many students’ access to quality education in an e-learning environment, otherwise known as the “Homework Gap.” The Homework Gap remains a long-standing critical issue for our community that has recently been exacerbated by the subsequent, rapid shift to e-learning due to the “social distancing” orders associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Many Marion County students need our help. A large portion estimated at 36,000 students lack an adequate high-speed Internet connection for e-learning at their residence. Furthermore, some 44,000 devices (laptops, tablet, e-readers) will also be required for students to utilize for e-learning. While some students have access to the internet through a mobile phone, that mode of connection cannot consistently support completion of e-learning assignments. Even after implementing the various subsidized and unsubsidized connectivity programs available to K-12 schools, many students are still without a connection. To close this gap and provide all students with an equitable opportunity for education, our school corporations need reliable, cost-effective solutions for providing adequate and managed e-learning connectivity directly to each student.

Our mission through a multi-phased RFP is to provide an effective collaboration, utilizing teamwork and technical oversight to ensure a set of procurement processes that are solutions based, timely, cost effective, efficient, and in accordance with security and usage policies required by each represented school district and charter school. This Phase 1 RFQ seeks proposals for the immediate procurement of student side cellular connection points as a priority. It should be noted that a follow on RFQ is expected to be released May 1 that will seek proposals to provide additional longer-term connected network solutions (i.e., virtual private networks over LTE, WiFi, or other network methods) that will ensure schools can provide all students with internet access that is set to e-Learning and moderates personal internet usage (i.e., gaming, streaming movies, non-curriculum content). Any considerations that might support both requests is welcome, but not required for this first procurement.
Vision

It is our duty to conduct an open process in an ethical manner that builds public and group confidence, preserves the integrity of an open and fair procurement process, and is open to multiple technical solutions. As this is a public procurement, we must set the example and build opportunities for cooperative purchasing to ensure public and philanthropic funds are expended in a manner that provides maximum benefit to public school students in Marion County.

Organization

For the purposes of this RFP process, the Richard M Fairbanks Foundation is serving as the facilitator for the needs of the Indianapolis E-Learning Fund and public schools in Marion County, overseeing the collection of proposals and distribution to the schools for their consideration. All purchasing decisions will be made by the Marion County public schools. To accomplish this task, we are organized as shown in the following set of supporting entities: all eleven Marion County school districts (Beech Grove, Decatur, Franklin, Indianapolis Public Schools, Lawrence, Perry, Pike, Warren, Washington, Wayne, Speedway) and the Center for Innovative Education Solutions, representing 50 public charter schools in Marion County. If you have any comments, concerns or questions about the RFQ information contained herein, please feel free to contact Claire Fiddian-Green, President & CEO, Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation, at fiddian-green@rmff.org and 317-663-4186. The following requirements should be considered and included in your proposals.

Cellular/LTE Hotspot Solutions Guidance

Solutions should consider the following:

- The solutions should provide 100% coverage for students residing in Marion County
- The solutions must allow for quick deployment, validation and connection by the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year. The start date by corporation ranges from July 27 to August 5, with schools distributing new equipment the week of July 20. The preferred solutions delivery date is July 13 to allow schools five business days for prep, inventory and configuration.
- The solutions response shall clearly spell out: unit pricing, price breaks, contract requirements including length and severability, and any other stipulations.
- The solutions shall clearly state the lead-time, and associated roll-out timing (including any required activation/validation)
- The solutions ideally would allow for open format (unlocked/non provider specific/easily software defined); if hardware is carrier specific this should be specified.
- Solutions should note if they can be set to allow the districts and schools to govern, monitor, and limit access to only e-learning and/or approved content, ultimately you must clearly stipulate the type of access and any available/optional controls
- The solutions shall allow for the optional purchase of a CIPA-compliant content filter to ensure schools can maintain federal compliance
- The solutions should allow for a zero-touch provisioning system and remote device administration (i.e., configuring SSIDs)
- The solutions should include monthly data caps of at least 20GB per line/device to support high-throughput activities associated with comprehensive e-learning curricula
- The solution(s) response should note any methods to track usage and utilization to better optimize the curriculum delivery
- The solutions should consider legacy end user devices composed of WiFi (primary) enabled end use devices and Cellular (secondary) that the districts and charter schools already have in their inventory, and responses should include the list of LTE bands supported so that schools can determine compatibility of legacy devices with the proposed solutions
- Responses should note whether schools would have the option to tunnel traffic back to their district for filtering purposes
Proposed Solutions Pricing Guidance

Proposal pricing should include the following:

- A breakdown of non-contract (capex) and contract reoccurring costs (opex)
- Expected useful life of the device and any warranty offering with costs
- Internet Data plan pricing for the hotspots including a detailed breakdown of data capacity, speed, rollover, and any associated restrictions or limitations
- If available, the cost for filters, management, or internet content control options
- A breakdown of all costs associated with responses provided to the solutions guidance above (i.e., tunneling traffic for filtering, data cap overruns)
- Clear explanation of any time-restricted discounts that may be tied to Covid19 policies/mandates and how the timeline of those discounts may be impacted by supply chain delays
- An explanation of the proposed solutions eligibility for Federal E-Rate funding received by school districts and charter schools, or noting any ineligibility considerations
- Description of how any pricing may be impacted by income levels of student families (i.e., percentage of students on free and reduced lunch or families on SNAP)
- Description of pricing implications should monthly data caps be crossed, along with a description of what happens to the proposed solutions once data caps are met (i.e., the solution will cease to function until the next month, throughput will be slowed down)
- Pricing should be clearly broken out with the following tiers shown: (15,000); (30,000); (50,000); (100,000); and (150,000) hotspots

Response Format and Timeline

Prospective vendors should respond with all available solutions and any recommended options per the above guidance. Responses should be no longer than 4 pages and should not include more than 6 pages of supporting materials (i.e., graphics, charts, coverage maps). **Responses are due by 6:00pm EST April 30, 2020,** to allow for expedited review and procurement of hardware and services the first week of May 2020. **Responses should be returned via email to Claire Fiddian-Green at fiddian-green@rmff.org.**