Information Technology Infrastructure Support Services
Request for Proposal Independent Review
For the
City of Doraville, Georgia
February 14th, 2010
Michael Cox

Background

This document is an independent review of the Information Technology Infrastructure Support Services RFP issued by the City of Doraville, Georgia January 2010. This assessment was requested by Doraville City Councilman Brian Bates.

As part of the process, the original Request for Proposal (RFP) was reviewed for content and scope of work requested by the City. In reviewing responses to Requests for Information (RFI) or Requests for Proposals (RFP) for Information Technology systems, services, and support, it is important to understand the current status of existing IT systems and services covered by the proposal. A 2008 assessment of the City's Information Technology (IT) infrastructure by Mimsware was reviewed for additional background information on Doraville's IT infrastructure. Review of the current RFPs indicate some of the concerns observed during the 2008 assessment have been corrected, additional comments and observations on the 2008 assessment will be covered at the end of this document.

In reviewing responses to RFPs, the reviewer must compare the scope of work in the RFP to the responses to ensure the responses address the critical elements of the RFP. It is also important to note where the responses differ from the RFP and what is not specifically addressed or left out of the response. In some cases, these differences or omissions can be addressed in the final Statement of Work (SOW) issued by the City, or, they could require amendments to the RFP.

Overview and Observations

Three of the proposals were similar in scope, averaging approximately $ 90k per year or $ 7.5k per month. One proposal was for $ 155k per year ($13k/month), and one was $ 197k per year ($ 16.4k per month).

The three low price proposals essentially provide remote systems management and remote application support. The systems management consists of installing remote management software on all systems to provide updates, patches, and user support. The Radical Support offering included unlimited hours of remote management and user support, the Intellispring proposal did not state the number of hours provided, and Sophicity provided only four (4) hours per week of support.

It is important to note that any service or support beyond the mainly automated remote systems management and user application support from these three vendors requires additional costs to the City. Moves, Adds, and Changes (MAC) were not clearly defined or specified in the responses, but likely include moving systems, installing new computers, laptops, and printers, and configuration changes for the networks, firewalls, and telecommunications equipment for the City. If the City does not currently have a good historical basis for what these additional requirements are, the costs to the City cannot be determined in advance.

Most of the respondents also described an initial systems evaluation and engineering report after contract award. This report would highlight the vendor's recommended upgrades and changes to existing infrastructure. It is not clear what would occur if the recommendations were not accepted by the City or what the potential costs would be. The City should consider in advance of contract award how the City will handle these situations.

The Management Group (TMG) proposal specified a full time technician/engineer to support Doraville's IT infrastructure. It appears the technician will be on site full time (40 hours/week), this should be confirmed by the City.

The most expensive proposal was by IVT for $ 197k per year ($ 16.4k per month) for unlimited remote management and support.

Proposal Specifics

Radical Support

Radical Support proposed a remote management and support system to remotely administer all systems and provide user application support.

A one hour "turn up" meeting is not realistic. Providing user passwords is not needed or advisable, system administration passwords would be required, should be provided in a secure manner.

$ 8k/ month remote support for 125 systems, does not cover moves, adds, or changes. Total cost cannot therefore be determined.

Radical would provide an on-site engineer for $ 9.7k/ month, not clear if this was in addition to "Option 1" at $ 8k per month or if it would cover moves, add, and changes. Need to clarify with Radical Support.

Intellispring

Lots of "boilerplate" standard proposal language in this proposal.

Page 10: 10-15 days review of existing infrastructure and planning, another 30 days transition. On page 12, the proposal mentions an assessment and recommendations would be prepared in the first 90 days. It is not clear what would happen if the City does not accept the recommendations or what the costs could be.

Looks like most of the high level support, including Microsoft and Citrix is outsourced to Synergy.

Hard to tell what Intellispring is actually proposing, looks like remote help desk only. Proposal does not discuss MACs, outages, server backups, etc.

References are unusual. Is Ciber or the Army the customer reference? References appear to mostly be cabling related, not IT systems support. No references to this type of work.

Sophicity

Remote systems management and desktop support, will install their own backup device. Extra cost for offsite data backup. They propose to do patching and management of Windows workstations and servers, do not mention anti-virus management and upgrades. AV on servers only?

Only four (4) hours of remote support per week, one (1) onsite network support visit per month. No onsite workstation support? MACs extra?

The Management Group (TMG)

Proposal provides an on-site technician 40 hours per week (City should confirm) for user and systems support. Proposal includes moves, adds, and changes for new PC's, Blackberries, printers, etc.

Proposal will use currently installed systems for monitoring, patching, and web filtering. The proposal indicates anti-virus software has been updated (City should confirm).

TMG has the best plan for upgrading and modernizing the City's network and infrastructure. Of course, they've been working on it since last spring and have inside information. They are including a lot of the needed upgrades and work as part of their proposal, with the other vendors it would be an extra cost for each upgrade project.

IVT

IVT's approach is good, if chosen, they will perform an initial assessment and report. As mentioned before, it is not clear what will occur if the City chooses not to implement the report recommendations or what the cost of implementation will be.

IVT specifically states they will not support any End of Life (EOL) hardware or software. (Note: Windows 2000 will be EOL summer 2010).

Cannot determine amount of on-site support or costs of moves, adds, or changes with IVT.

IVT was the most expensive at $ 197k per year ($ 16.4k per month) for mainly remote support.

Recommendations

Overall, there is not much difference in proposals and support between the three low cost bidders (Radical, Intellispring, and Sophicity) and the high bidder, IVT. The Intellispring proposal was particularly lacking in details and they seem to be outsourcing the main support for Windows and Citrix. Radical Support was the best of the low cost three, with the addition of a full time on-site engineer, their cost and proposal is very similar to The Management Group (TMG).

Of the current proposals, The Management Group appears to be the best value to the City. TMG proposes a full time on-site technician/engineer to provide support, systems management, and system upgrades and changes and has the advantage of already understanding the City's systems and infrastructure.

When one compares the average cost of the three low bids at $ 96k per year to TMG's cost of $ 155k,

the $ 59k difference ($ 155k - $ 96k = $ 59k) would provide only 454 hours of on-site for moves, add, changes at $ 130 per hour, where you get 1,880 hours from TMG.

The City should confirm TMG intends for the technician to be on-site full time working for the City.

If the City decides to interview the vendors, TMG and Radical Support (with the on-site option) appear to be the best overall options for the City to consider.

Additional Recommendations

Having reviewed the proposals and the 2008 Mimsware Assessment Report, it would be my recommendation the City of Doraville commission an updated independent Assessment report prior to or in conjunction with the selection of a new IT infrastructure vendor for the City.

The report and proposals highlighted numerous items which should be addressed to keep the City's IT systems running reliably and securely. Some of the items appear to have been corrected within the last year. Some of the issues to be addressed include:

- Current, supported Operating Systems for all servers and workstations (XP or Win 7, no Windows 2000)
- All systems under Operating System configuration and patch management, with a standardized workstation configuration
- All systems with the same, updated, managed anti-virus solution
- A three or four year hardware refresh cycle for all workstations and servers.
- Independent security review of all system settings including firewalls and all wireless connectivity
- One City network, with one Internet gateway, utilizing two ISPs for redundancy.
- A true Internet DMZ for Internet facing services such as email, web server, remote access. No connections should be allowed directly into the main City network or servers directly from the Internet.
- Sensitive internal systems such as the Police Department and financial systems should be further protected by internal network segmentation and additional firewalls.
- Document all aspects of the City's network and IT infrasturcture

About Michael Cox
A resident of the Northwoods neighborhood, Michael Cox is the current Security Team Leader for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. His responsibilities include managing information technology security for the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the Federal Drug Administration (FDA) and others. A twenty-year veteran of the CDC, Michael served as the agency's IT Security Chief before assuming his current role with HHS.