HOWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
PURCHASING DEPARTMENT
10910 Clarksville Pike
Ellicott City, MD 21042
(410) 313-6644

ADDENDUM NO. 2
(Total Pages - 08)

September 28, 2021

Bid No. 065.21.B5

Cloud Hosting Services Solution

Opening Date: October 8, 2021   Time: 1:00 P.M.

The following shall be incorporated into the captioned solicitation as though included in the original documents issued.

The Board of Education authorizes the following changes, clarifications and or attachments to the solicitation documents; however, such changes shall not relieve the firm of their responsibilities as otherwise required by the solicitation documents.

The bid due date has been extended from October 1, 2021 at 1:00 P.M. to **October 8, 2021** at 1:00 P.M.

Changes/Additions

Section 6 – Evaluation Process
Add 1.3 Evaluation weight (see item #2 of this section for referenced items)
Technical response (ref. 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4) 35%
Cost (ref. 2.7) 40%
References/K-12 experience preferred (ref. 2.5 and 2.6) 25%

Please see the attached series of questions and associated responses.

There are no other changes.

Request for Proposal No. 065.21.B5
Cloud Hosting Solution Services

Addendum #2

RFP #065.21.B5

Cloud Hosting Services Solution

Addendum #2

	Questions	Answers
1	Has there been any assessment tool used to evaluate the CPU, RAM, and Disk storage required for the servers used in both the production and test environment? IF yes could that be shared in the RFP addendum? If not can Howard County share details on the CPU, RAM, and Disk storage requirements for the servers used in both the production and test environment?	HCPSS does not use any assessment tool. Current environment: Database Server: 48 logical processors, 256 GB RAM and 4TB of storage. Web Server: 13 web servers that are 5 process servers with 32 logical processors, 32 GB RAM and 200 GB HDD. Test (Web and Process): 2 Test Servers. Each has 32 logical processors, 32 GB RAM and 200 GB HDD. Test Database Server: 1 server. 24 Processors, 192 GB RAM, 2TB HDD.
2	Beyond application patching, will the contractor be expected to provide any other application management services for the Synergy application?	Yes.
3	To achieve a 99.99% uptime on AWS requires the application to be deployed across two Availability Zones. Should the contractor assume that deploying Synergy into a multi-AZ architecture is part of this response?	Yes. HCPSS would like a price for both Multiple AZ and Single AZ.
4	Please explain your requirements for routine audits of systems and software.	The contractor is expected to regularly monitor the system, software, and logs. The contractor is expected to proactively raises issues and concern on the performance of the system and provide recommendation to improve the same.

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	Questions	Answers
5	Are you accepting out of state bids? Is there is requirement to be registered in Maryland to participate?	HCPSS will accept out of state, but all data must remain in the US.
6	Do you have a targeted go-live date after the application is migrated to AWS Cloud?	Contractor is required to migrate the systems and applications in one week, upon agreement of the schedule from HCPSS.
7	Are the following attachments (C: Data Sharing Agreement, D: Agreement for Professional Services, and E: Contractor Performance/Evaluation Scorecard) to be signed and submitted and included with bid response? Or will they be signed post-award at contract negotiation/signing?	Attachment C: Data Sharing Agreement needs to be included with the bid response. Attachment D is a post-award document. Attachment E is done throughout the life of the contract.
8	Please provide Current System Configurations for the following systems including: Current Environment (PROD and TEST) CPU core count Memory Storage (for SQL Server how much storage per AAG mode)	See responses to Questions #1 and #3.
9	On the eMaryland Marketplace Advantage portal it is stated that there is a 25% MBE participation goal. However, within the RFP that participation goal is not mentioned. Can you confirm what, if any, MBE participation goal exists for this project?	The MBE goal is 25%.
10	What type of network connectivity is there in place today between AWS and HCPSS?	We have an IKEv2 tunnel established from our firewall to AWS.
11	Does HCPSS currently have a dedicated AWS connection in place today such as AWS Direct Connect? If, yes what is the dedicated	No.

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	Questions	Answers
	network bandwidth and how does this interconnect back into the HCPSS environment?	
12	What are the number of Internet connections at HCPSS, type of connections and location?	We have two ISPs at each of our two Data Centers.
13	Confirming, will the managed service provider (MSP) be hosting the Synergy application in their own AWS tenant/environment?	This is correct.
14	Does the cloud deployment model need to be Public or are Private, Hybrid and Community models also under consideration?	The websites will be public facing.
15	How are the students and parents going to access the Synergy application (Web portal and/or downloadable application)?	Everyone accesses Synergy via the web.
16	What is the projected growth of DB from FY 2022 to FY 2023 to FY2024 (i.e., when will the additional 4TB be needed)?	We expect the DB to grow by approximately 350 GB per school year. Current DB is 1.3 TB. If the vendor is also offering a training site, then it will mirror Production.
17	What are the typical activity levels during peak and non-peak times (to help size the computing needs)?	HCPSS does not monitor this activity currently.
18	Will there be a Synergy subject matter expert (SME) and/or project manager available to consult with throughout the migration process?	Yes.
19	Is it the expectation of HCPSS that the vendor/contractor will provide 24/7/365 support services for all constituents (students, teachers, parents, administrators, etc.)?	No, the contractor will support HCPSS Technology Staff and Administrators. The contractor will not be responsible for supporting students, teachers, or parents.
20	What is the expected support level (Business or Enterprise level)?	Contractor will be solely responsible to contact AWS for any support.
21	Does HCPSS require the use of multifactor authentication (MFA)? If, yes does the vendor need to integrate the existing MFA solution into the current platform or would the vendor provide their own recommendation?	Yes, MFA is required. Contractor must provide a TOTP (Time-based One-Time password) compatible solution
22	Does HCPSS control the external routers, firewalls, and security devices?	Yes.
23	Is load balancing being used on any of the Internet or WAN connections?	No.

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	Questions	Answers
24	What type of security devices are in place on the network, firewalls, IDS, VPN, etc.?	Palo Alto firewalls provide firewall, NAT, content filters, and routing. Pulse Secure provides VPN service.
25	What is the size of HCPSS MIS/IT department or equivalent?	There are approximately 82 IT staff members.
26	Is there a dedicated LAN/WAN department at HCPSS, if so, how many people?	Yes. The number of staff fluctuates.
27	Is there a dedicated information security department at HCPSS, if so, how many people?	Yes. The number of staff fluctuates.
28	Is offshore work allowed?	Bidders must comply with all Federal and State of Maryland laws and regulations. All data must remain in the United States.
29	Will HCPSS provide weights with the evaluation criteria?	Yes, addendum. Technical response 35% Cost 40% References/K-12 experience preferred 25%
30	Will HCPSS provide a list of all Synergy environments?	Our Synergy environments are Dev, Test, Train, and Production. This RFP is only for Test, Train and Production.
31	Will HCPSS provide hardware specs (RAM, CPU, etc.) for the current Synergy environment in the date center?	See response to Question #1.
32	Will HCPSS provide an architecture diagram?	No.
33	What is the acceptable downtime duration for production migration from on-premise to AWS environment?	See response to Question #6.
34	What's the current size of 2 storage array? Is there any scale requirement in the future in terms of storage size on AWS?	See response to Question #16.
35	What's storage array OS system Linux or windows?	The storage array is Windows OS.
36	Is file storage currently accessible over the Server Message Block (SMB) protocol?	Yes.
37	Synergy DB was not explicitly called out. Can we consider 2 Database (DB) servers (PowerEdge R440) as Synergy DB?	Yes. The current configuration is in an Active/Passive cluster. Contractor is expected to change that to have high availability.
38	We read about the availability requirement for different zone. Do we need cross region disaster recovery capabilities? What is the RTO?	See response to Question #3.

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	Questions	Answers
39	Do we need to provide 24x7 on call support?	See response to Question #14.
40	How often do we require for the system updates any patches? Weekly/Monthly or ad hoc?	OS updates should be completed monthly at a minimum, off hours and should be done in a manner that will not affect system availability. Program updates will need to be deployed weekly and on an ad hoc basis.
41	What are the current Synergy Prod web servers and process servers OS system? It looks like windows system, just need to confirm.	HCPSS confirms the servers are on Windows OS.
42	What type of application has been deployed to web servers and process servers? It looks like .net application, just need to confirm.	It is the Synergy application with HCPSS customizations built on .net.
43	How often is the current release schedule?	HCPSS creates its custom patches which will need to be deployed weekly and ad hoc for emergencies. Edupoint typically releases monthly patches, but these will only need to be deployed at the request of HCPSS.
44	Does the HCPSS require the contractor to provide software licenses to on-premise servers?	No.
45	Does the HCPSS require the contractor to perform work in HCPSS data centers? More information on "Must provide all hardware, hardware maintenance and replacements in the hosted solution" requested.	No. This only applies to the cloud hosted solution.
46	Is the current HCPSS Single Sign On (SSO) system integrated with other HCPSS AWS accounts?	No.
47	Can the contractor use any firewall vendors? Is the contractor responsible for providing firewall licenses?	The contractor is responsible for providing HCPSS with the ability to configure port and protocol level rules per dynamic host or group of hosts with support for self-reference, e.g., AWS security groups.
48	Is the contractor responsible for SQL Server management?	Yes. HCPSS will need access to Select, Update, Delete, Insert, Execute, Update Stored Procedures, and other SQL tasks.
49	Will HCPSS consider granting a 2-week due date extension?	Yes, per addendum.
50	Kindly furnish clarity about the total no. of servers (Including High Availability).	See responses to Questions #1 and #3.

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	Questions	Answers
51	What Would be the exact size of the servers in terms of Core, RAM and storage?	See response to Question #1.
52	What would be the total consumption of bandwidth (Ingress / Outgress or IN/OUT)?	The approximate estimate based on current design is 410GB in / 4.5TB out per month.
53	Do you stream virtual classes or virtual meetings through the server? if yes, then please help us with the total no. of hours in a month.	No.
54	Is HCPSS able to provide the specifications for each hardware component in the current Synergy environment listed on pg. 17 (e.g. CPU, RAM)?	See response to Question #1.
55	Is HCPSS's current test environment 100% utilized throughout the month (e.g. always-on)?	Yes.
56	Does HCPSS have a defined RTO requirement?	The RTO requirement is four (4) minutes
57	We see current production DB size is 1.2 TB, what is the total storage footprint currently in the production environment?	See responses to Questions #1 and #16.
58	The solicitation states on page 17 that the contractor is responsible for configuring HCPSS's firewall, is there a specific firewall technology that is in use, or is the county open to leveraging AWS native firewall services (e.g. NACLs, Security Groups, AWS WAF, etc.)?	See response to Question #47.
59	Regarding the HCPSS work server described on page 18, how many total/concurrent users access this server and how often is it used?	Work server might be running up to 50 jobs at one time during peak workload.
60	On page 18 under sections 'Configuring and Moving Current Environments to the AWS Cloud' and under 'Security and System Administration', there are references to maintaining, configuring and installing hardware; can HCPSS confirm if on-premises hardware support is required as part of this RFP, and if there is any anticipation of hardware support required by the contractor in the future?	See response to Question #45.

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	Questions	Answers
61	In the 'Security and System Administration' section, can HCPSS provide clarity on what audits and configurations are required for the software?	See response to Question #4.
62	Would HCPSS consider removing the requirement for Amazon AWS cloud environment – in general, similar RFPs include generic cloud requirements that can be satisfied with more than one cloud environment vendor?	The identification of Amazon AWS serves as the basis and standard level of cloud environment HCPSS desires. The intent is to work with a single cloud environment. We do require an IaaS (Infrastructure as a Service) service model.
63	Would HCPSS consider revising security requirements to require prospective vendors to comply with a modern security management framework standard, e.g., NIST or FedRAMP to protect HCPSS data?	Security of our data is extremely important. An addendum will be issued that includes reference to compliance to FedRAMP certification or NIST compliance as a benchmark of security.
64	Would HCPSS consider revising security requirements to require prospective vendors to provide a security incident response capability through a 24/7 Security Operations Center (SOC)?	Yes. HCPSS will consider this requirement. If this is changed, we will issue an addendum.
65	Would HCPSS consider revising security requirements to require prospective vendors to provide a comprehensive security control implementation documentation package that can be audited by an independent 3rd party (e.g., System Security Plan, Disaster Recovery Plan, Configuration Management Plan, Incident Response Plan, etc.)?	HCPSS will explore the requirement of the selected provider to have an independent 3rd party audit of the security control plan/documentation.
66	Would HCPSS consider reviewing the Insurance Requirements for vendors to include Cyber Security / Data Breach Insurance – ten million dollars ($10,000,000) per occurrence? The coverage must be valid at all locations where work is performed or data or other information concerning the HCPSS's claimants or employers is processed or stored.	HCPSS participates in an insurance pool, and the suggested insurance requirement will be reviewed and modified by addendum accordingly.
67	Would HCPSS consider adding a statement that HCPSS prefers that data to be hosted locally in Howard County or in the State of Maryland thus ensuring that HCPSS student data is kept local?	While HCPSS encourages and supports local participation, we cannot limit hosting to Howard County. This limitation is too restrictive and not within the spirit of competition.