Answers to Democratic Republic of the Congo RFI

Question 1
- How many sites shall we base our offer on?

Answer 1

While NetHope provides an estimated total number of existing member sites in order to give respondents a rough sense of scale, no minimum threshold for the number of sites to be served exists. Rather than a focus on site count, compelling responses will more carefully address the "big picture", demonstrating that service providers see rural markets as viable and that a scalable, replicable approach can be used to deliver service at a level above and beyond individual customers. NetHope seeks insights on approaches through which a service provider proposes to leverage NetHope members as anchor tenants as one means of shifting the economics of rural service delivery. By aggregating services across numerous consumer nodes, providers would serve areas and populations earlier deemed as unprofitable or high risk due to low consumer demand, etc.

Question 2
- Shall we consider that 100Mbps the maximum volume of pooled bandwidth?

Answer 2

Not necessarily. This number is simply meant to be a guide to respondents. The total volume of pooled bandwidth will ultimately depend on the number of NetHope members that migrate to the new service (as well as other factors such as variations in the bandwidth intensity of network applications following such a migration). The number of NetHope members who might migrate is not guaranteed, but many could/might if the alternative solutions are attractive enough. Further, if the respondent is already providing services in the DRC, this could be additive to the overall volume of bandwidth.

Question 3
- What technology (satellite, 3G, DSL, MPLS etc) is each site using today

Answer 3

The current sites use a range of technology as services are supplied by a number of different providers

Question 4
- Who is the current services provider (MTN, Vodacom, Airtel etc)

Answer 4

The providers vary from mobile network operators, to internet service providers, to VSAT service providers

Question 5
- What is the current throughput per site Down Load / Up Load (kbps, Mbps)

Answer 5

Please note in the RFI that we are looking for a solutions provider that wants to expand/extend solutions to as much of the DRC as possible, including to the NetHope members. As such, we are looking for solutions that extend beyond upload/download per individual site, but rather a solution that is affordable for rural populations.

Question 6
- What is the most important aspect of the new planned network; improve user experience (higher throughput and availability) or price

Answer 6

Please refer to Section II and Section III of the RFI

Question 7
- Initial requirement is to provide connected and internet Access to 80 sites. Is 100MB across all sites or one site per month

Answer 7

100MB is the estimated volume, per month, by aggregating the volume consumed by NetHope members

Question 8
- All 80 sites will be awarded to one supplier

Answer 8

It is possible that more than one provider could be selected

Question 9
- Is NetHope/GBI looking to own and operate the new network. Do you have or plan to have an operator/VSAT license

Answer 9

NetHope has NO plans to be a service provider

Question 10
- $250K from USAID for this project, is this budget for capex or opex per year. When is this grant expected

Answer 10

$250k is the rough cost of the proposed USAID project. It is up to the supplier to propose a technical approach on how these resources are used.

Question 11
- Any guarantee for the funding beyond the $250K. Meaning who will provide the financing guarantee.

Answer 11

The service provided is meant to be sustainable. NetHope is not able to guarantee funding beyond USAID investment or contracts of the NetHope members.

Question 12

- Being funded in part by USAID, will this limit the suppliers to American companies Only

Answer 12

The offer is open to companies providing solutions in the DRC

Question 13

- From the answer to Question 7: «100MB is the estimated volume, per month, by aggregating the volume consumed by NetHope members» **Is it really just 100 Mbytes data consumed by 80+ locations belonging to 10 organizations and distributed in 12 geographical areas?** (100 MB of data consumed during 8 working hours 5 days a week during a month imply average data rate of 1.4 kbps)

Answer 13

Again, these figures are estimates only. It is not assured that all NetHope members will transfer to a new provider. In addition, it is hoped that the local communities will add significant volume.

Question 14

- When talking about extending the range of existing connectivity only (without providing the connectivity service as such, e.g., Kinshasa example), what would be the funding source for such projects and who is supposed to own the infrastructure built?

Answer 14

NetHope and USAID are looking to leverage the current NetHope members as anchor tenants through a demand aggregation strategy to provide improved services to the NetHope members AND to ensure that the local communities also benefit from the connectivity that is coming into the region. As such, firms responding to the RFI need to determine the most practical solution to provide broadband at affordable prices to communities.

Question 15

- Will the established connectivity infrastructure in general owned by NetHope NGO members or the provider?

Answer 15

NetHope is not trying to be prescriptive so please propose your best technical and business solution to the paucity of broadband in rural areas of the DRC.

Question 16

- Long-haul last mile can be leveraged substantially cheaper if spectrum fees are revoked. Working closely with local government, can (does) NetHope get exempt for use of the licensed spectrum?

Answer 16

Unfortunately NetHope does not.

Question 17

- Section III, pp.4: Is it required that the contractor(s) donate another $250,000 or more in addition to the funding provided by USAID?

Answer 17

One strategy used by organizations is to offer leverage or cost-share so maximize development impact. This is almost always viewed as very positive by USAID as well as NetHope.

NOTE: One firm is looking for partners and is willing to be a subcontractor. If you are a prime and looking to partner, please contract UltiSat, Brum Cerzosimo – Senior Director Global Accounts: +1(240) 813 7582 (office)