Last Mile Equipment Request for Quote

Issue Date: Nov 4, 2026

Due Date: Thursday, November 19, 2026, 5:00pm PST

Questions: bigequipmentrfq@cenic.org

Address: RFQ: https://cenic.org/publications/rfps

Email proposals to: bigequipmentrfq@cenic.org

Introduction

In this RFQ, CENIC is soliciting, on behalf of its constituent member institutions, responses from qualified Bidders for:

- Acquisition of network equipment per Section 1.0 below
- Acquisition of other network equipment deemed necessary for a site based on discussion with site technical contacts and after review by CENIC Engineering
- Acquisition of equipment maintenance and software license for 1-2 year term

The Corporation for Education Network Initiatives in California (CENIC), a non-profit corporation operating California Research and Education Network (CalREN), in close collaboration with the California Department of Education (CDE) and the California State Library (CSL), seeks to identify and implement last mile broadband solutions for anchor institutions in underserved and unserved communities. To that end, the state of California has allocated “last mile” funding to establish broadband connectivity for schools, libraries, and other anchor institutions lacking broadband. CENIC is working with CDE on the Broadband Infrastructure Grant (BIG) program, with approximately $12.7 million in funding.

For the BIG program, CENIC is currently seeking to purchase network equipment for approximately 40 K-12 school sites. While CENIC will initially purchase the equipment, each site has committed to taking ownership of the equipment and paying the ongoing costs of maintaining the equipment after the grant period has expired, typically 1-2 years after the purchase date. Consequently, the bidder must commit to transferring equipment ownership into the name of the school prior to shipment. We expect to identify additional sites in subsequent years and/or through other efforts, and bidders must agree to multi-year contracts, covering any CENIC anchor institutions covered by CENIC projects.

Bidders are required to use the pricing template (see Appendix A) contained in this RFQ in their responses.

Proposals must be received no later than Thursday, November 19, 2026, at 5:00pm PST. Please see the Administrative section below for complete details.

1.0 Scope of work and required responses

The equipment purchased through this RFQ will be used to implement new or additional network connections between the individual school sites and/or the CalREN backbone, either to replace or augment each site's existing Internet connectivity. The scope of this RFQ includes the following elements:

- School site (or other anchor institution) network equipment and maintenance to ensure improved connectivity to CalREN. An example of a typical configuration for a school site may include any of the following equipment:
    - Cisco, Juniper, or similar switch or router, capable of accepting at least a 1 Gbps fiber-based circuit with no blocking
    - Cisco, FortiGate, or similar combined router/firewall, capable of accepting at least a 1 Gbps fiber-based circuit with no blocking
    - Lithium Ion based UPS with management card
    - Multimode fiber or single mode fiber optic transceivers
    - Fiber jumper cables and/or Cat6 patch cables to interconnect the above gear
- Additional network equipment as necessary to accommodate the improved connection at the corresponding aggregation point (usually a district office or County Office of Education for school sites)

Acquisitions shall utilize any discounts the bidder can offer in response to this RFQ. Responses must include:

- Discount level for hardware (based on list retail pricing) per manufacturer and type of equipment;
- Discount level for hardware maintenance (based on list retail pricing) per manufacturer and type of equipment;
- Number of years discount levels will remain in effect;
- Confirmation of ability to accept orders and payment from CENIC while recognizing ownership by individual CENIC member sites;
- Ability to switch payment responsibility for maintenance from CENIC to individual member sites while maintaining the same discount level as provided to CENIC.

2.0 General Administrative Information

A. **Due date.** Responses must be received in electronic format via email at bigequipmentrfq@cenic.org by Thursday, November 19, 2026 at 5:00pm PST**.**
B. **Basis for Award**. This RFQ is being released for planning purposes. It is the desire to award contract(s) to the most cost-effective proposals for products and services based on relevant experience, availability, references, cost, and any other parameters CENIC may deem appropriate. CENIC reserves the right to award contract(s) based *solely* upon the lowest overall cost.

C. **Awards**. CENIC may make more than one award or may make no award as a result of this solicitation. The decision to make no award, to make one award, or to make more than one award is final. There is no protest.
D. **Type of contract**. The resulting contract shall specify fixed discounts (based on retail price) for network equipment acquisition and maintenance for CENIC member institutions and other anchor institutions included in CENIC-managed projects.
E. **Bidder costs**. CENIC shall assume no responsibility for Bidder costs incurred in developing a proposal.
F. **Questions on the RFQ**. Any questions regarding the RFQ must be submitted in writing via e-mail to bigequipmentrfq@cenic.org and will be responded to in writing.
G. **Rejection of proposals**. CENIC may reject proposals if, based on CENIC's sole judgment, the proposals are deemed to be conditional or incomplete.
H. **Negotiation**. CENIC reserves the right to negotiate any aspect of any proposal deemed responsive to this RFQ.
I. **Confidential material**. All agreements between CENIC and network equipment manufacturers are confidential, and to the degree any given Bidder may be made aware of these agreements, the Bidder may not disclose the extent or terms of the agreements to any other party. Additionally, the Bidder must notify CENIC of any specific portions of Bidder's proposals considered confidential or proprietary. CENIC will take reasonable efforts to protect the confidentiality of such material but makes no guarantees that such material may be protected. Entire proposals designated as confidential may be rejected.
J. **Sales Tax**. Tax rates on equipment and services must be based on the location of individual sites and their associated tax liabilities.

3.0 Required Administrative Responses

Bidders must respond to all the following required items, in the order given below. Incomplete bids are subject to rejection and are based on CENIC's sole judgement.

A. **Cover letter**. Bidders shall provide a cover letter that includes a brief statement of intent to offer attractive discounts on the equipment and associated maintenance, qualifications for selection, and signature by an authorized officer of the firm who has legal authority in such transactions. Unsigned proposals shall be rejected. Include Bidder's name, address, telephone, and fax numbers and the name(s) of authorized representative(s).
B. **Invoices**. Equipment orders will be placed based on each site's requirements. Each Bidder will be expected to provide a single, itemized invoice **per site** for any equipment purchased by CENIC unless otherwise requested by CENIC.
C. **Qualifications**. Bidders must demonstrate their ability and capacity to acquire the proposed equipment and associated maintenance by documenting their qualifications, including existing relationships with network hardware manufacturers.
D. **References**. Bidders will be judged in part on their demonstrated experience with engagements similar in scope to the work outlined in this RFQ, and on schedules similar to those proposed.

Bidders should include references, with name and contact number, for three (3) such organizations. CENIC will contact any references provided.

E. **Contract period**. Time is of the essence. CENIC anticipates this engagement to begin following award in December 2026 and terminate upon project completion, potentially through June 2031.

F. **Price and schedule**. At a minimum, proposals shall include:
    a. Percentage discount from list retail price on network equipment (by make and model if discounts vary)
    b. Percentage discount from list retail price on maintenance service agreements
    c. Percentage discount from list retail price on specific non-network equipment (e.g., UPS)
    d. Percentage discount from list retail price on jumper and patch cables
    e. Confirmation that equipment ownership and maintenance agreements can be transferred from CENIC to anchor institutions

G. **Optional Services**. Bidders are encouraged to propose optional services that may be relevant to the scope of the proposal but are not specifically requested by CENIC as part of this RFQ, however CENIC shall be under no obligation to consider, nor award, any such services.

H. **Any exceptions to this RFQ must be explicitly noted.** Please note that significant exceptions may render the proposal non-responsive.

I. **Terms and Conditions**. Bidders MUST propose Terms and Conditions in the form of a contract as part of the response. Contracts MUST be provided as Word documents and cannot be locked to editing. The Terms and Conditions proposed MUST include all relevant terms from this RFQ. All proposed Terms and Conditions will be subject to CENIC's approval and subject to negotiations before acceptance.