

USAC Request for Information (RFI) IT-24-169 for Supply Chain Risk Management (SCRM) Tool

REQUEST INFORMATION:

Method of Solicitation:	Request for Information (“RFI”)
RFI Number:	IT-24-169
RFI Issue Date:	November 15, 2024
Question Due Date:	December 4, 2024
Response Due Date:	December 16, 2024

RFI ISSUED BY:

Universal Service Administrative Co.
700 12th Street, NW, Suite 900
Washington, DC 20005

CONTACT INFORMATION

USAC CONTACT INFORMATION	OFFEROR CONTACT INFORMATION
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OFFEROR SIGNATURE

Name and Title

Date

1. ABOUT US

Through its administration of the Universal Service Fund (“USF”) programs on behalf of the Federal Communications Commission (“FCC”), USAC works to promote the availability of quality telecommunications services at just, reasonable, and affordable rates, and to increase access to advanced telecommunications services throughout the nation. Specifically, the USF programs provide funding for the expansion of telecommunications and broadband access to rural communities and health care facilities, schools and libraries, and low-income households. Through program administration, auditing, and outreach, USAC works with contributors, service providers, and program beneficiaries to achieve the program goals articulated by the FCC for the High Cost Program, Lifeline Program, Rural Health Care Program, and Schools and Libraries Program.

USAC strives to provide efficient, responsible stewardship of the programs, each of which is a key national asset in making important telecommunications and Internet services available to consumers, health care providers, schools, and libraries throughout the United States. The program divisions are supported by additional USAC personnel in other divisions, including Finance, Office of General Counsel (“OGC”), Information Systems, Audit and Assurance, Enterprise Process Improvement (“EPI”), and Human Resources (“HR”).

Consistent with FCC rules, USAC does not make policy nor interpret unclear provisions of statutes or the FCC’s rules. The USF is funded by contributions from telecommunications carriers, including wireline and wireless companies, and contributions from interconnected voice over internet protocol (“VoIP”) providers, including cable companies that provide voice service, based on an assessment of their interstate and international end-user revenues. These contributions are typically passed through to consumers through a universal service fee line item on their telephone bills.

High Cost Program

The High Cost Program is designed to ensure that consumers in rural, insular, and high-cost areas have access to modern communications networks capable of providing voice and broadband service, both fixed and mobile, at rates that are reasonably comparable to those in urban areas (“High Cost”). High Cost fulfills this universal service goal by allowing eligible carriers who serve these areas to recover some of their costs from the USF. Like all USF programs, the administration of High Cost has undergone significant modernization in the last several years to increase innovation and ensure beneficiaries have access to updated technology. USAC developed and now leverages the High Cost Universal Broadband Portal (“HUBB”), which allows participating carriers to file deployment data showing where they are building out mass-market, high-speed internet service by precise location. This information includes latitude and longitude coordinates for every location where service is available, and USAC displays this information on a public-facing map to show the impact of high-cost funding on broadband expansion throughout the United States.

Lifeline Program

The Lifeline Program provides support for discounts on broadband and voice services to eligible low-income households (“Lifeline”). USAC uses its centralized application system, the Lifeline National Eligibility Verifier (“National Verifier”), to verify consumer eligibility through proof of income or the consumer’s participation in a qualifying federal benefit program, such as Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (“SNAP”), Federal Public Housing Assistance, or Veterans and Survivors Pension Benefit. USAC focuses on metrics and data analytics for Lifeline improvement and provides outreach efforts to eligible households to increase participation in and the effectiveness of Lifeline. USAC also works to ensure program integrity by supporting the needs of Lifeline stakeholders, reducing program inefficiencies, and combating waste, fraud, and abuse. USAC reviews processes regularly to increase compliance, identify avenues for operational improvements, and refine program controls, such as audit processes.

Rural Health Care Program

The Rural Health Care Program supports health care facilities in bringing medical care to rural areas through increased connectivity (“RHC”). RHC consists of two main component programs: (1) the Telecommunications Program (“Telecom”) and (2) the Healthcare Connect Fund Program (“HCF”). The FCC established Telecom in 1997 to subsidize the difference between urban and rural rates for telecommunications services. Under Telecom, eligible rural health care providers can obtain rates on telecommunications services in rural areas that are reasonably comparable to rates charged for similar services in corresponding urban areas. In 2012, the FCC established HCF to promote the use of broadband services and facilitate the formation of health care provider consortia that include both rural and urban health care providers. HCF provides a discount on an array of advanced telecommunications and information services such as Internet access, dark fiber, business data, traditional DSL, and private carriage services. These telecommunications and broadband services support telemedicine by ensuring that health care providers can deliver cutting edge solutions and treatments to Americans residing in rural areas.

Schools and Libraries Program (E-Rate)

The Schools and Libraries Program helps schools and libraries obtain high-speed Internet access and telecommunications services and equipment at affordable rates (“E-Rate”). E-Rate provides a discount for the cost of broadband and telecommunications services to and within schools and libraries in order to support a modern and dynamic learning environment. Applicants and service providers submit FCC Forms (e.g. requests for services or funding) and other compliance-related documentation to the E-Rate Productivity Center (“EPC”), an electronic platform that enables participation in the program. USAC frequently invests in new tools and data analytics capabilities to support the success of the program in alignment with the FCC’s goals.

Additional information on USF programs can be found at: <https://www.usac.org/about/universal-service/>.

2. COMPANY PROFILE

USAC is a not-for-profit Delaware corporation operating under the oversight of the FCC. USAC is not a federal agency, a government corporation, a government controlled corporation or other establishment in the Executive Branch of the United States Government. USAC is not a contractor to the federal government. Any Contract to be awarded as a result of a subsequent RFP from this RFI will not be a subcontract under a federal prime contract. USAC does, however, conduct its procurements in accordance with the terms of a Memorandum of Understanding with the FCC, which requires USAC to adhere to the following provisions from the Code of Federal Regulations: 2 C.F.R. §§ 200.318-321; 200.324; 200.326-327 and App. II to C.F.R. Part 200 (collectively “Procurement Regulations”). Further, USAC IT Systems that are used to administer the USF programs and USAC vendors that handle and manage USF data must be compliant with FISMA and NIST requirements as applicable to federal agencies.

3. PURPOSE

The Universal Service Administrative Company (“USAC”) is issuing this Request for Information (RFI) seeking information from US-based companies with the ability to provide a Supply Chain Risk Management/vendor cybersecurity assessment software. The goal of this RFI is to provide USAC with the latest information on software applications that are available to support cybersecurity supply chain risk management in compliance with Federal standards, integrate with procurement processes, and maintain current data on software, services, and hardware supply chain risks. ***Please note that this is not a solicitation for products and/or services and this inquiry will not result in an award or contract.***

The specifications and information gathered from responses to this RFI will be used to evaluate the offerings of the current marketplace and may lead to the development and preparation of a formal Request for Proposal (RFP).

USAC is soliciting information from commercial vendors, application service providers, associated integration service providers, and other interested parties capable of assisting USAC in identifying a software tool that either can assess and rate the security practices of vendors and potential vendors and the security of their products. Any response submitted should include cost estimates for licensing, support with the configuration, customization, implementation, and training, as well. Information submitted by any interested party will be done so voluntarily and with the understanding that this RFI is for information gathering purposes only and is not a formal solicitation. Similarly, cost ranges will be used solely for budgetary analysis and establishing a target budget. Information presented during this information gathering process will not be considered as a response to any solicitation subsequently issued by USAC.

Respondents may be asked to provide a demonstration of their products and services. This would include a guided tour of their product, business capabilities and technology. Demonstrations may be presented through Internet web conferencing. No compensation will be made by USAC for demonstrations.

4. TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

A. FUNCTIONALITIES/CAPABILITIES:

USAC is soliciting information on available tools to support management of supply chain risk, preferably tools that are available as Software-as-a-Service (SaaS).

The Solution should offer the following functionalities/capabilities:

1. Assess and rate the security practices of vendors and potential vendors and the security of their products. As an example, the tool should be able to scan a potential vendor’s attack surface for vulnerabilities and weaknesses and provide a security score and explanation of the methodology behind it.
2. Availability such that it can be used to evaluate vendors prior to purchase/license renewals as well as on an ad hoc basis after purchase/renewal.
3. Provide timely alerts to USAC when a vendor in USAC’s supply chain is impacted by a cybersecurity incident.
4. Collect and share customizable questionnaire responses from vendors and potential vendors to determine their visibility into their own sub-tier information and communication technology (ICT) supply chain, their security standards compliance, SOC reports, etc.
5. Assist in vendor deep dives from open source information to help build out a vendor risk profile.
6. Ideally, the tool would also be able to obtain useable software bills of materials (SBOMs) and hardware bills of materials (HBOMs) from vendors.
7. USAC expects that this tool will provide an Application Programming Interface (API) and can be configured to integrate as a service such as with a procurement application to verify the risk of a candidate technology purchase prior to executing the procurement.

The RFI response should also include a sample workflow of investigating the supply chain risk of a potential software, service, hardware, or vendor procurement.

5. PROPOSED RFI TIMELINE

Event	Date
RFI Released	November 15, 2024
Questions Due to USAC	December 4, 2024, by 11:00 a.m. ET
Answers to Questions Released	December 6, 2024, by 5:00 p.m. ET
Responses Due	December 16, 2024, by 11:00 a.m. ET
Demos (if needed)	TBD, 2024

6. RFI SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

All responses to this RFI are due no later than **December 16, 2024, by 11:00 a.m. ET**. Responses received after this date and time may not be considered for review.

Responses should be prepared simply and economically and provide a straightforward and concise explanation of the information requested. Emphasis should be on completeness and clarity.

Please submit one (1) electronic copy (PDF) of your response to USAC at Procurement@usac.org, **with the designated Procurement agent in copy**. All submissions must include “Response to RFI IT-24-169 Supply Chain Risk Management Tool” in the subject line. Please note: all electronic submissions must be limited to a maximum size of 25 MB.

7. RFI RESPONSE FORMAT

The response must include the following sections and must have numbered pages and include an index or table of contents referencing the appropriate page numbers.

SECTION 1 – ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

Maximum: Three (3) Pages

Please provide a response that includes the following:

- Years of experience in developing software solutions related to SCRM Tool, or other relevant areas.
- Your company’s core competencies
- What differentiates your organization and existing solutions in the market.
- Number of clients you serve with similar solutions.

SECTION 2 – PROPOSED TECHNICAL SOLUTION

Maximum: Eight (8) Pages

Please provide a solution response to the associated SCRM Tool requirements in RFI Section 3 that are related to your proposed software solution and product. Solution descriptions must be concise and directly address the requirements.

SECTION 3 – EXPERIENCE

Maximum: Two (2) Pages

Proposals shall provide a response that addresses the following question:

- What relevant corporate experience does the company have with developing similar software or products for a similar sized engagement?

In addition, proposals shall provide client references that demonstrate similar provided solutions for those organizations.

SECTION 4 – PRICING ESTIMATE

Maximum: One (1) Page

(Note: Any prices provided as part of this RFI are intended solely for budgetary analysis and to establish a reasonable target budget).

Responses shall include a cost estimate for the following:

- Include an estimate for all relevant software components, such as software purchases, licenses and ongoing software support.
- Include an estimate for integration and overall project management services to lead the implementation effort, develop business processes that include recommendations on incorporating numerous processes, workflows, and requirements in an integrated platform and provide training.

8. OFFEROR INQUIRIES AND QUESTIONS

Questions and inquiries regarding this RFI must be submitted in writing by **December 4, 2024, by 11:00 a.m. ET**. Please submit all questions to USAC at procurement@usac.org, **with the designated Procurement agent in copy**. All submissions must include “Questions to RFI IT-24-169 – Supply Chain Risk Management Tool” in the subject line.