Troup County Schools – GA - Airgapped Backup Solution RFP FAQ

Airgapped backup solution must:

1. Hardware and Software:
- Include all necessary hardware and software components

Will Troup County Schools provide all connectivity cables?

If no, please describe the cable connector types and lengths to connect to current on-prem equipment?

This will depend on the solution proposed but in general we have plenty of open 10Gbps SFP+ ports on our TOR switches in the datacenter. Whatever the proposed solution requires to make those connections to our infrastructure will need to be included in the proposal.

- Be capable of nightly duplication of existing backup sets from current Data Domain units

Will Data Domain Units provide the initial landing zone for backups from the source (hypervisor, databases, NAS, etc.)?

As specified in the RFP, PPDM backing up to DD6400's is the current backup solution. If the proposed solution is a "rip and replace" as opposed to augmenting the existing backup solution with airgap capabilities, this will need to be specified in the bid response.

If Data Domain Units are doing the backups, it will be hard for any backup vendor to read backups written by Avamar. Please then clarify your need for a new backup solution to duplicate existing backup sets from Data Domain units.

As specified in the RFP, we have a functional backup regime. This RFP is looking to augment our existing backup solution with immutable airgap backups. The logical way to do that is to replicate existing backup sets from our existing DD6400's onto an airgapped backup solution.

Please note that as specified in the RFP, Avamar is not part of our existing environment. Our existing backup software is Dell Power Protect Data Manager (PPDM).

- Provide deduplication and analysis of inbound files to ensure data integrity
Deduplication is a part of the processing along with compression which is done post-processing on our proposed Backup Solution. Please describe your intentions here.

It is important to ensure that data written to backup media is not already compromised by malware or encrypted by ransomware. Many solutions employ analytics on inbound backup data to ensure that what's being written is not already compromised. If the proposed solution is not capable of performing that function that will need to be specified in the response.

Deduplication before backup data ever hits the wire is the most efficient process in backup jobs. Some solutions are not capable of deduping at the source and if that is the case that will need to be specified in the response.

2. Storage and Retention:
- Retain at minimum: 30 dailies, 8 weeklies, 6 monthlies, and 2 yearly backups

Are you open to discussing a cost effective way to blend our “Backup Solution” storage as well as offloading to NFSv3/S3 for long-term retention (e.g. Yearly backups)?

Note: The storage onboard of the hyperconverged infrastructure for our “Backup Solution” should be viewed as “premium” and we typically recommend to keep between 7-90 Days of data on our “Backup Solution” storage. If there are compliance or regulatory requirements for storing data for longer, we recommend we look at “Archiving” that into a NFSv3/S3 target where those long-term retentions would be honored.

All proposals will be evaluated based on the evaluation matrix. If additional components are required to meet the specified retention that will need to be specified in the response.

- Specify total available storage capacity

What is your storage capacity requirements now and in 5 years?

See the RFP for existing dataset size. Growth is fairly stagnant for our on-prem environment so as specified in the RFP responses should account for annual growth of < 10%.

- Account for an estimated annual growth of backup sets at <10%

Are you open to a sizing exercise?

This won't be required, please refer to the RFP for existing dataset sizes and expected growth.

3. Security:
- Be unreachable from the production network except during backup/replication operations

Please clarify. Are you referring to how Dell Cyber Vault works which requires a timed-based replication for air-gapping?

This is pretty self explanatory but the requirement is just what the RFP says: during backup/replication operations the proposed solution will obviously require accessibility from the network. At all other times the airgapped solution should remain completely inaccessible from the production network as a security measure. I am aware of several commercially available solutions which provide this capability but it is the responsibility of the vendor to determine the best solution.

4. Performance:
- Detail deduplication capabilities

Are you most interested in a deduplication solution or a cyber resilient solution that could help recover from a cyber incident?

The purpose of this project is to implement an airgapped backup solution that could help recover from a catastrophic data loss incident. If the proposed solution is not capable of deduplication that should be specified in the response.

- Provide projected fill rate of proposed storage

Are you open to a sizing exercise?

This won't be required, please refer to the RFP for existing dataset sizes and expected growth.

5. Scalability:
- Outline methods for expanding storage in the future if necessary

Are you most interested in a hyper-converged, scale-out architecture that allows you to add more nodes?

The RFP does not specify an architecture, it is the vendor's burden to propose the best fit given our requirements. The purpose of this requirement is to be aware of how the proposed solution is able to add additional storage capacity in the future should our needs require it.

6. Services:
- Include installation, initial configuration, and testing of the solution -

- Provide licensing for a period of 5 years –
Are you open to a 3 year option?

The RFP specifies 5 years, if the proposed solution is for a different term that will need to be specified in the response.

- Offer end-user training on operation of the solution –

Please clarify the end-user training you are looking for to include onsite/remote and number of end-users? We have many different training options including custom training.

The RFP does not specify onsite vs remote so either is acceptable. The audience will be 4 system administrators. The training required is specific to operation of the proposed airgapped backup solution.

7. License:
- All necessary licenses must be included to operate the solution for 5 years.

Are you open to a 3 year option?

The RFP specifies 5 years, if the proposed solution is for a different term that will need to be specified in the response.

8. Evaluation Criteria

Can you please provide the weighted evaluation matrix?

Proposals will be evaluated based on:
- Compliance with specified requirements - 25%
- Total cost of ownership over 5 years - 30%
- Technical merit and innovation of the solution - 20%
- Vendor experience and references - 15%
- Implementation and support services - 10%

Question 9: In the RFP it is stated that you need the product to “be capable of nightly duplication of existing backup sets from current Data Domain units.” We are a bit unclear on this expectation. Will Data Domain be the storage target or are you for a new storage target? If you could expand on this it would be helpful.

As the RFP states, the existing environment is currently DD6400. The purpose of this project is to add airgapped backup capabilities to our existing solution. Some vendors are proposing rip and replace and some are proposing augmentation of our existing solution. The winning response will be decided in accordance with the weighted evaluation matrix, see answer #8 above.

Question 10: In Section 2 you state, “Our existing setup includes an on-premises Data Domain DD6400 which replicates to a second DD6400 at our secondary datacenter over 10Gbps fiber. Current retention policy is 7 dailies, 7 weeklies, 7 monthlies, and 7 yearlies, with backup immutability enabled.” Are both sites production sites or is one just a DR site?

We do not keep a separate DR site, both of our datacenters are Active/Active running production workloads.