

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
For Telecommunication Planning Services
In Conjunction With The
Northampton County Community Broadband Planning Project

Project Description

The County of Northampton, Virginia (the County) is soliciting proposals from qualified firms to assist with a planning project for community-based broadband telecommunications. The successful consultant will undertake a comprehensive approach that includes identification of need within the community and the potential economic and social impact that new broadband telecommunications infrastructure would produce.

This project will result in the production of a Community Telecommunications Plan containing a needs assessment, broadband education and application development strategies, “Last Mile” connectivity solutions, preliminary engineering and construction cost estimates in Phase I, and organizational and operational recommendations for future network implementation projects, and funding strategies for potential projects in Phase II. The desired outcome of this planning effort is to provide a tool for communities to assist in future implementation projects that will lead to enhanced educational opportunities, improved medical services, additional economic development opportunities, and improved quality of life.

This project is funded through a grant from the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development and local resources. The project will be implemented by a project management team, consisting of locality officials, staff from the Planning District Commission, local business, medical and educational entities, regional economic development partners, and local telecommunications providers. The team will provide oversight and direction to the consulting entity selected.

Timeframe

All project activities for Phase I must be completed no later than **March 31, 2008**. Phase II project activities (if funded) must be completed no later than **June 30, 2008**.

Scope of Services – Phase I

A Community Telecommunications Plan is the product that will be produced through this project and will include the following:

1. Needs Assessment

Includes gathering information on the current telecommunication needs and usage in the community, perform a gap analysis of existing telecommunications services in relation to demand and broadband availability, identify trends in use of broadband by existing and potential customers as well as any other pertinent trends, examine user rates, develop projections of potential broadband services, and examine how the community’s efforts relate to on-going and future regional telecommunication efforts.

2. Broadband Education Development Strategies and End User Application Identification

To build demand for broadband the community must have good community education and training programs. This element will investigate current programs available in the community, denote training gaps, and research and identify potential training partners to provide additional broadband education programs. In addition, the consultant will identify common and customer specific broadband uses and applications and assist the community in developing a strategy for expanding their availability.

3. Last Mile Connectivity Solutions

“Last Mile” connectivity refers to the connection between the end user and the internet. This element should provide a variety of options for achieving this objective based on community needs and tie-in to the areas of economic development potential, education, and health care. Recommendations to reach outlying areas and remote sites should also be included.

4. Preliminary Engineering Design and Cost Estimates

Develop a preliminary design of a broadband telecommunications network outlining the type of installation (fiber-optic cable [aerial or buried], wireless, or other state-of-the-art technology), identify rights-of-way, network electronics specifications, and include preliminary cost estimates for construction of the proposed solutions. This element also includes GIS mapping of the following: a) existing telecommunications infrastructure, b) areas of need, and c) proposed infrastructure routes of “Last Mile” solutions (base mapping will be provided).

Scope of Services – Phase II

This phase of work may be funded at a later date. However, the consultant who responds to this RFP must be competent to perform these services and able to complete them if funding is procured. The existing contract would be modified to include these services, and the cost to perform them should be listed separately in responses to this RFP.

1. Organization and Network Operation Options

This element should provide a comprehensive presentation of the possible organizational/ownership structures for proposed broadband infrastructure networks – including but not limited to (as allowed by Virginia Law) owner/operator, public/private partnerships, lease-hold agreements. All options should include potential staffing requirements, legal requirements, maintenance, and budgeting estimates. In addition, the consultant should identify the interest level of all service providers in the community using a “Request for Interest”, develop a comprehensive business plan for leasing and maintaining the network, and develop a master plan for buildout of high-speed broadband access for the entire Eastern Shore of Virginia using the research garnered in Phase I as well as a July 2007 study completed for Accomack County, Chincoteague and Exmore.

2. Funding Strategies for Future Implementation Projects

Provide information on the availability and relevance of potential funding sources for any future projects that arise from the recommendations in the Plan. This includes governmental sources, foundations, and private resources.

Proposal Contents

1. Statement of Qualifications

All respondents must submit a written Statement of Qualifications to include information about the respondent directly related to each of the Selection Criteria. All information should be submitted succinctly.

2. Proposal

Respondents must provide an explanation of how they propose to accomplish the project outcome within the stated timeframe.

Selection Process

The County will appoint a Selection Committee to review and evaluate all proposals submitted by firm's responding to the RFP. The proposals will be evaluated and ranked based on the Selection Criteria. The County may ask top ranked firms to attend a presentation interview as part of the evaluation process. Firms invited to interview should be prepared to have general discussions on non-binding estimates of cost to provide requested services.

At the conclusion of the evaluation process the firms will be ranked in priority order with the highest ranking firm being selected to negotiate a contract with the County. If a contract satisfactory to both parties cannot be negotiated, the County will then enter into negotiations with the next highest ranking firm and so on until an agreement is reached.

Selection Criteria

The respondents will be evaluated on the following criteria:

1. The Consultant's understanding of the intended project outcome, i.e., what the intended end product is to be and what the project is intended to accomplish.
2. The Consultant's proposed approach for achieving the outcome.
3. The scope of specific services the Consultant intends to provide including how the Consultant proposes to involve the Grantee in the planning and design process and the Consultant's overall approach to the project.
4. Any potential problems the Consultant perceives with the project as proposed.
5. Professional qualifications and experience of the individuals the Consultant will assign to provide the planning and engineering services.
6. Knowledge of Federal and Virginia telecommunications laws.
7. Knowledge and familiarity with the Management Team process.
8. Capacity of the Consultant to perform the work within the given time limitations, taking into consideration the current and planned workload of the firm.
9. Names, addresses, telephone numbers, and e-mail addresses of clients for whom the Consultant has performed projects of a similar type and size within the last 5 years.

Submittal

Respondents should submit five (5) copies to the address below no later than 2:00 p.m.

ET, October 24 , 2007 to:

Barbara Schwenk

Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission

P. O. Box 417

Accomac, Virginia 23301

757-787-2936 x115

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Minority and/or female-owned businesses are encouraged to apply.

The County is an equal opportunity employer and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, national origin or against faith-based organizations.