



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

To Develop Regional Broadband Planning and Management in Cumberland County

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- I. PURPOSE
- II. BACKGROUND
- III. KEY OBJECTIVES
- IV. TIMELINE
- V. DESIRED QUALIFICATIONS
- VI. FORMAT FOR PROPOSALS
- VII. SELECTION CRITERIA
- VIII. DISCLAIMERS
- IX. COVER PAGE

I. PURPOSE

Cumberland County Government in Cumberland County, Maine, seeks a qualified contractor with experience in broadband planning and utility development to create a guidebook that will facilitate collaborative regional broadband expansion in Cumberland County.

II. BACKGROUND

Home to roughly 293,000 residents, Cumberland County is the most populous county in Maine - accounting for twenty percent of the state's population within less than five percent of the land mass. Despite our relative density, many towns in Cumberland County meet the USDA Rural Development Classification of "rural" under 7-CFR 1738.

Several Cumberland County municipalities suffer from a lack of access to affordable, high speed broadband. Even consumers living along major arteries in the County report that they cannot gain access to acceptable speeds for home and business use. These towns have come to accept that a private sector solution is unlikely, and so they are exploring municipal investment.

But an individual community venturing into the world of municipal broadband will run into countless roadblocks: from absorbing the cost of construction and maintenance, to the complexity of make-ready negotiations, to establishing service contracts, to the question of whether usage rates will support the investment long term. A combination of these barriers - risk, cost and complexity - can stop a municipally-supported broadband project in its tracks.

Based on feedback from our community leaders, Cumberland County has made access to broadband a priority goal. With limited resources and no home rule, our capability to support this goal lies in planning, education, advocacy, and very strategic funding. Early in 2018, Cumberland County secured a planning grant of \$25,000 through the Community Development Block Grant Program to help interested communities form a regional utility; and a construction grant for a portion of their multi-town project when they are ready to move forward.

Several communities have already expressed interest in participating in a regional effort, with varying levels of early commitment. Communities in the Lakes Region - particularly Gray, Raymond, Standish and Windham - have put years of work into developing a broadband plan, with heavy interest extending to the outer reaches of the County. The Greater Portland region is also exploring regional collaboration.

Through this RFP, Cumberland County seeks a qualified contractor to perform the study funded by that planning grant. Our expectation is **a thorough report that will act as a playbook for interested communities to create a permanent, scalable utility; understand the upfront and ongoing costs associated with building service out to their taxpayers; and provide a thorough resource map of where fiber and other broadband resources currently exist, who can be negotiated with to prevent duplication of efforts, and how much it would cost - and how long it would take - to build out service to each town in the County.**

Contractors with questions regarding this RFP should submit them via email to Travis Kennedy at kennedy@cumberlandcounty.org, and copy Barbara Owens at owens@cumberlandcounty.org. Please title the subject of the email "Questions about Broadband RFP." You can submit questions at any time, but they will not be considered until the end of the question period, which is October 12, 2018 at 4:00 pm.

III. KEY OBJECTIVES

The successful contract winner should represent their capability to produce a playbook for Cumberland County and its municipalities that advises on three major objectives: Resource Mapping, Financing, and Utility Development.

1. RESOURCE MAPPING

Perform a County-wide network design. Outline the costs and complexities of building fiber-supported broadband to each municipality, including but not limited to:

- Cost to build major arteries vs. cost to build directly to end users
- Cost to supply service to the municipally incorporated islands in Casco Bay and on Sebago Lake, and the islands with full time residents which are a part of another municipality; using methods including but not limited to:
 - Developing a loop from Portland through the islands and back to Falmouth by concentrated microwave beaming, with service then distributed through new construction on the islands; and
 - Purchasing or contracting with privately owned fiber networks already in place on the islands.

2. FINANCING

Identify competing methods by which communities would either own or dispense of the product, including but not limited to:

- pure public financing and permanent municipal/utility ownership;
- public investment, to be sold to private interests;
- And hybrid methods including both options.

Present methods by which communities can raise revenue to pay for construction, maintenance and service, including but not limited to:

- Property tax assessments
- Municipal Bonds - General Obligation and Revenue
- User fees
- And hybrid methods of the above

Finally, the contractor will perform a survey of residents, determining in concert with Cumberland County the best methods to distribute the survey. The survey should identify demand and willingness/sensitivity to cost models relative to possible Internet speeds - among any other questions that the contractor deems necessary to produce a thorough report on community interest and expected use rates.

3. UTILITY DEVELOPMENT

Present comprehensive options for communities to use in the development of a voluntary, scalable, permanent regional broadband utility in Cumberland County which would be responsible for:

- Negotiating contracts with Internet Service Providers
- Negotiating contracts with construction and maintenance firms
- Serving as the fiscal agent responsible for financing projects, determining the costs of each project to individual communities and collecting necessary revenue from participating towns.

- Perform legal work, make-ready negotiations and all other functions of a permanent utility responsible for building and maintaining broadband service.

Other questions that this portion of the study should explore include, but are not limited to:

- What are the benefits/drawbacks of creating one regional entity vs. several smaller ones? (ie: islands only, Lakes Region, etc.)
- What are the benefits and drawbacks of Cumberland County serving as home to such a utility, vs a completely separate, permanent new entity?

IV: TIMELINE

Unless amended by Cumberland County, interested parties must adhere to the schedule below; all deadlines must be met by 04:00 pm EST on the dates listed.

1. RFP RELEASED:	10/03/2018
2. QUESTIONS FROM INTERESTED CONTRACTORS DUE:	10/12/2018
3. ANSWERS RELEASED BY CUMBERLAND COUNTY:	10/24/2018
4. PROPOSALS DUE:	10/31/2018
5. DECISION:	11/09/2018
6. WORK BEGINS:	11/23/2018

V. DESIRED QUALIFICATIONS

Candidates will be considered based on their strengths and experience in the following fields:

- Ability to demonstrate a thorough knowledge of all facets of municipal broadband development, including regulatory, technical and financial/economic.
- Direct experience in developing cross-border municipal partnerships.
- Experience performing analysis on needs vs. available resources, including through consumer surveys and direct consumer engagement.
- Experience developing network plans that are scalable beyond initial partners
- Experience with identifying current assets, and whenever possible, negotiating with asset holders to incorporate existing infrastructure into a network plan.
- Knowledge of digital inclusion programs.
- Extensive knowledge of financing models, with the capability to present breakdowns of cost commitments to all relevant parties through models pursued but not limited to those listed in Part III, Section 2 of this RFP.

VI: FORMAT FOR PROPOSALS

To be considered, 3 copies of the sealed proposal submission and an electronic copy in PDF format must be received no later than 4:00 pm on October 31 at

Cumberland County Executive Office
Room 100
142 Federal Street,
Portland, Maine 04101

Submissions shall be marked Broadband Study, Attention Travis Kennedy, Director of Public Affairs.

Submissions received after this time will not be considered.

The format of proposals should adhere to the following standards:

1. **COVER PAGE:**
 - All respondents must complete the attached cover page, including critical firm details and relevant contact information.
2. **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**
 - Summary of the organization, its methodology and proposed approach to the RFP. (Maximum three pages).
3. **QUALIFICATIONS OF THE ORGANIZATION:**
 - Summary of the organization's history, resources and experience performing similar work.
4. **STAFF QUALIFICATIONS:**
 - List specifically the staff of the organization performing work on this project, their qualifications and experience in this field.
5. **PROJECT APPROACH:**
 - Describe your firm's approach to achieving the outcomes requested in this proposal. How will you collaborate with the County, municipalities, asset owners and other relevant entities to seek information? What methodologies will you employ to turn data into firm recommendations? How will you present your findings as a viable resource for municipal staff, elected officials and members of the public with varying levels of expertise? List the tasks you will need to take in order to see the project from inception to completion.
6. **TIMELINE:**
 - Provide an estimated timeline for each phase of the project.
7. **BUDGET:**
 - Provide a budget aligned to project milestones, costs, and tasks.

8. REFERENCES:

- Include references from at least three clients of the firm, preferably those who have contracted with the firm for services similar to those sought by this RFP.
- Describe the client, the project, and the outcome of the work.
- Provide contact information for the client, including phone and email address.

9. EOP:

- State whether your firm is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

VII. SELECTION CRITERIA

Submissions will be evaluated and ranked by the County. Among the factors the County will consider in its evaluation are:

- consultant’s demonstrated experience;
- Ability to meet the requirements of this RFP
- qualifications and experience of the project team
- approach and understanding of this project
- Capability to perform a study that is specific and unique to Cumberland County and its towns, cities and islands.

The County at its discretion, may interview the top ranked firms. The County reserves the right to solicit information about the Consultant for all sources available to the County and to request additional information from the Consultant.

The County will negotiate terms for a contract to complete the tasks with the top ranked firm. If a satisfactory agreement cannot be reached, negotiations with that firm will be suspended and negotiations opened with the second highest ranked firm. The process will continue until agreement is reached and a contract is executed.

After the evaluation of the proposals and selection of the successful contractor, all bidders will be notified in writing of the selected firm.

VII. DISCLAIMERS

- The County reserves the right to accept or reject any or all submittals received, cancel or modify the RFP in part or in its entirety, or change the RFP guidelines, when the County believes it is in their best interest to do so.

- The County reserves the right to accept or reject any and all Statements of Qualifications received in response to the RFP and to re-advertise for new submittals.
- The County will not be responsible for any costs incurred by the respondent in the preparation of a response to this Request for Proposals.
- The County reserves the right to delay or discontinue this selection process at any time during the process.
- The County will not be held responsible if, in its opinion, the best interests of the project will be served by not awarding all or parts of the study as defined in this Request for Proposals.
- The County reserves the right to:
 - Request the submission of Statements modifications at any time before the selection is made, if the County believes it is in their best interest.
Consider Statements or modifications received at any time before the selection is made, if the County believes it is in their best interest.
 - Request clarification and/or additional information from the Respondent during the evaluation process.
 - Utilize ideas submitted in the Statements received, regardless of whether the Respondent is selected.
 - Negotiate with the selected Respondent(s) to include further services not identified in this RFP.

PROJECT PROPOSAL FORM
For Broadband Development Planning
*** This sheet must be included in your proposal ***

The undersigned, an authorized representative for the firm responding to this RFP, hereby declares that they have read and understand all conditions as outlined in this Request for Proposals; and that the proposal is made in accordance with the same.

COMPANY NAME: _____

PRINT NAME AND TITLE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

PHONE NUMBER: _____

TYPE OF ORGANIZATION*: _____

STATE OF INCORPORATION, IF APPLICABLE _____ FEDERAL TAX ID:

AUTHORIZED SIGNATURE: _____

Note: proposals must bear the handwritten signature of a duly authorized member or employee.

DATE: _____

** Type of organization may be partnership, corporation, individual, or other (please describe if "other")*