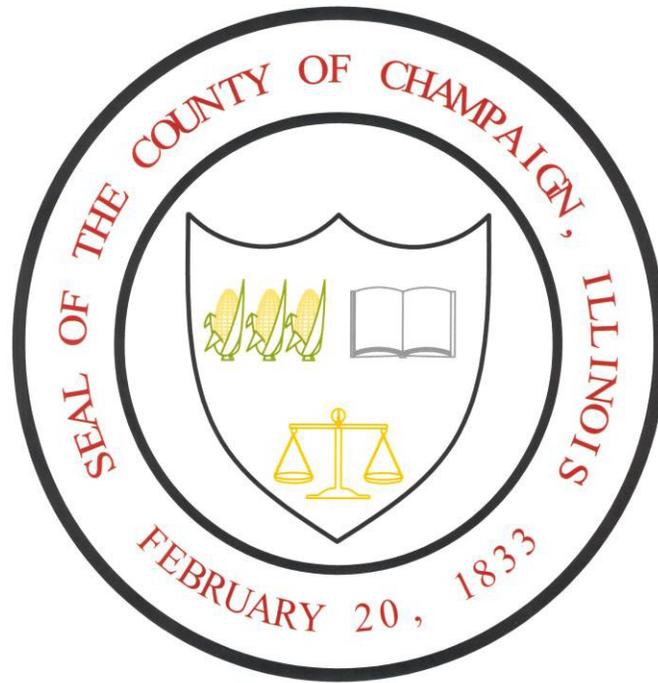


CHAMPAIGN COUNTY EXECUTIVE'S OFFICE



REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS (RFQ): 2021-008

CHAMPAIGN COUNTY BROADBAND PLAN

CONSULTANT SERVICES

Sealed Proposal Due Date: 1:30pm, Friday, July 16, 2021



**REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS: 2021-008
CHAMPAIGN COUNTY BROADBAND PLAN CONSULTANT SERVICES**

July 1, 2021

On behalf of the Champaign County Board, I invite you to furnish a proposal in accordance with the General Requirements and Proposal Format requirements as documented herein. Carefully read the attached documents and follow the procedures as outlined in order to be considered for selection for this project.

Sealed Proposals: All proposals are to be submitted as outlined. To be considered for the award of contract, vendors will deliver one (1) original and ten (10) hard copies, and one electronic copy (Microsoft Office or PDF format) to the following address:

Attn.: Darlene Kloeppe, County Executive
Champaign County Administrative Services
Brookens Administrative Center
1776 East Washington Street
Urbana, Illinois 61802

By 1:30pm on Friday, July 16, 2021

**All proposals shall be delivered in a sealed envelope clearly marked
“SEALED PROPOSAL –
RFQ 2021-008 – Champaign County Broadband Plan Consultant Services”.**
**The proposal shall include the entire response to this Request for Qualifications
and any amendments which may subsequently be issued.**
**Proposals received after the above stated time will be considered a late quote and will
not be accepted.**

Please direct questions regarding the proposal package to Kathy Larson, ARPA Project Manager, at 217-384-3776 or klarson@ccrpc.org.

Cordially yours,

Darlene Kloeppe, County Executive

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I. INTRODUCTION

Champaign County is seeking proposals from qualified firms interested in creating a sustainable, broadband master plan for the entire county to address existing digital inequities and barriers to access, adoption, and utilization of robust broadband by all residents, businesses, and institutions.

Although sections of Champaign County, home to some of the world’s supercomputers, are well-served by broadband access, other areas are woefully unserved or underserved. The COVID-19 pandemic brought to light the importance of a more robust broadband system for all sectors of the county, and the County Board has undertaken the formation of a Broadband Task Force to further this cause. The County is interested in developing a comprehensive multi-year strategy to support broadband coverage for the entire county.

II. INSTRUCTIONS TO PROPOSERS

1. All proposals must be submitted to:
Darlene Kloeppel, County Executive
Brookens Administrative Center
1776 East Washington St.
Urbana, IL 61802

All questions regarding the proposal shall be directed in writing to (e-mail accepted):

Kathy Larson, ARPA Project Mgr.
Brookens Administrative Center
1776 East Washington St.
Urbana, IL 61802
e-mail: klarson@ccrpc.org

2. All responses to this RFQ must be delivered in a sealed envelope clearly labeled “**RFQ 2021-008 – Champaign County Broadband Plan Consultant Services**”. All proposals must be received by 1:30pm on Friday, July 16, 2021. One (1) original and ten (10) hard copies of your response, and one digital/electronic copy of your response to this RFQ must be submitted. Proposals arriving after the deadline will not be accepted.
3. Proposals should be prepared simply and economically, providing a straight-forward, concise description of provider capabilities to satisfy the requirements of the RFQ. Emphasis should be on completeness and clarity of content.

4. An authorized representative of the firm must complete and sign the proposal.
5. The County Executive or representative will notify appropriate firms if the County wishes to interview them and will establish the timeline for those interviews.
6. Failure to comply with any part of the RFQ may result in rejection of the proposal as non-responsive.
7. In submitting qualifications, it is understood by the undersigned that the right is reserved by the County of Champaign to accept any qualifications, to reject any and all qualifications, and to waive any irregularities or informalities which are in the best interest of the County of Champaign.

III. MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

The County encourages proposals from all firms meeting the following minimum qualifications. Provide information on agency background and experience in the following areas:

1. Access: Outline the direct knowledge and experience your company has regarding technical infrastructure broadband solutions to address access gaps for municipal clients
2. Adoption and Utilization: Outline the direct knowledge and experience your company has regarding solutions to address adoption and utilization gaps for municipal clients
3. Financial: Describe direct experience and knowledge your company has creating and analyzing financial plans and models including capital requirements, operational pro formas, grant writing and funds obtainment, and financing options for similar solution challenges.
4. Regulatory/Legal: Describe any direct experience and knowledge your company has in analyzing and interpreting the regulatory and legal landscape and providing analysis and guidance on these issues as they pertain to the various options contained in the proposal.
5. Certifications and Expertise of team members (in cybersecurity, designing fiber, permit processes, aerial and underground fiber, and other pertinent areas).
6. Services: Describe any direct experience and knowledge your company has in providing additional services such as grant writing, deployment project management, and business community analysis and other support and guidance surrounding broadband services.
7. Project Management: Outline your company's direct knowledge and experience with structured project management.

8. Partnerships: Share your company's experience in working with state and local governments and public-private sector collaborations.

IV. TERMS and CONDITIONS

1. The County reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to terminate this process at any time, or reject any and all proposals without penalty, prior to the execution of a contract acceptable to the County. Final selection will be based on the proposal which best meets the requirements set forth in the RFQ and are in the best interest of Champaign County.
2. The County reserves the right to request clarification of information submitted and to request additional information of one or more applicants.
3. Any proposal may be withdrawn up until the date and time set above for the opening of proposals. Any proposal not so withdrawn shall constitute an irrevocable offer, for a period of 90 days, to provide the County the services set forth in the attached specifications, or until one or more of the proposals have been approved by the County, whichever occurs first.
4. Any agreement or contract resulting from the acceptance of a proposal shall be on forms either supplied or approved by the County and shall contain, as a minimum, all applicable provisions of the RFQ. The County reserves the right to reject any agreement that does not conform to the RFQ and any County requirements for agreements and contracts.
5. The County shall not be responsible for any costs incurred by the firm in preparing, submitting, or presenting its response to the request for qualifications.
6. The successful Proposer will be required to provide evidence of insurance for General Liability, Employers Liability, and Errors and Omissions Insurance. The firm will also be required to provide workers' compensation insurance in accordance with Illinois State Law.

V. SELECTION CRITERIA

The County will screen all proposals and generally evaluate them on the criteria outlined below. The County's Evaluation Team shall include members of the County's Broadband Task Force (County Board members, community members, County Chief Information Officer), County Executive and ARPA Project Manager. Minority and female-owned businesses are encouraged to apply. Proposal evaluation criteria will include:

1. Compliance with the RFQ requirements.

2. Expertise of project team.
3. Demonstrated ability to provide services for a county the size of Champaign with similar scope of activities.
4. The accuracy of the firm's perception of the County's needs and the firm's method(s) for meeting those needs.
5. References for past work.
6. The fee proposal for providing the requested services.
7. The availability of other related support services.
8. Any other information provided that the County deems valuable.

VI. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The County of Champaign has a population of 209,741 according to 2010 U.S. Census. It is the 10th largest county in the state of Illinois, and home to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, several national/international companies, and a large arts community. Most of the county's land area is committed to agricultural uses. Located in East Central Illinois, the county is a transportation hub for highway, rail and air traffic.

The policy making body is the twenty-two (22) member county board. The FY2021 approved General Corporate Fund operating budget is almost \$42 million. The County's fiscal year runs from January 1st through December 31st. The County is a recipient of American Rescue Plan Act funding and would like to establish a multi-year plan for broadband investment with some of these one-time funds.

VII. SCOPE of SERVICES DESIRED

We expect that the broadband master plan consulting project scope of work will include the components detailed below. If your team disagrees with any of these components, or feels additional work is required or recommended, your proposal should clearly articulate your recommended modifications. The selected consultant team will be expected to complete the following:

1. ORGANIZATION AND LOCAL LEADERSHIP:
Working with the Broadband Taskforce, the consultant will help to clarify the leadership structure for the ongoing deployment by identifying the requisite stakeholders and resources that are required for best practice and effective planning and leadership. In addition, organizational recommendations will be anticipated to support the recommended management and deployment of the proposed

solution design. This may include but not be limited to clarifying participants, roles, commitments, organizational structure (formal and informal), and making necessary recommendations to the Task Force and related stakeholders on resources and organizational structure necessary to support this initiative now and into the foreseeable future.

2. ACCESS PLAN:

- a. **Technical Analysis:** Building on the initial work of local providers' assessments, the project effort will include researching and validating existing public and private sector internet infrastructure, technology, and assets within the County; develop an inventory and provide recommendations for expanding broadband services to residents and businesses. Identify potential network routes and interconnection points, existing and possible infrastructure recommendations to support and maximize service utilizing regional assets with an emphasis on identifying areas for funding priorities based on various demographic components for development.
- b. **Market Analysis:** Compile and analyze information on needs, usage and currently available solutions for all constituent groups including residents, businesses, institutions and agencies; perform a gap analysis matching existing service providers and products to those constituent groups, while identifying trends and opportunities.
- c. **Current Use **and** Need/Value Analysis:** Analyze and summarize the current solutions in place to bring internet to residents that are being implemented across the city - including any temporary solutions implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic for short term response and determine effective sundown and replacement plans. Utilize various methods of evaluation to explore the presence and level of internet service among stakeholders, specifically probing the value equation to assess current interest, appetite and need priority. Identify unserved and underserved areas specifically.
- d. **Preliminary Design and Cost Estimates of Broadband Solution Model:** The high-level broadband solution model should present a detailed view of the solutions, business models, sustainability requirements and funding models. In addition, the plan should include detail in the development strategy and concept for network design, outline type(s) of technology and business delivery models; identify rights-of-way and describe network specifications and structural options. Include preliminary cost estimates for construction of the proposed installations and related costs including but not limited to engineering, permitting, legal services, project administration and GIS mapping, maintenance, etc. Include GIS mapping of the following: a) existing infrastructure, b) areas of need, and c) proposed infrastructure routes of connectivity solutions.

- e. Network Operation Options: Provide an assessment of the telecommunications environment detailing the types of services, pricing, availability and limitations. Identify all potential service providers and investigate potential collaboration opportunities among key stakeholders and vendors. Review viable technical and delivery methods as allowed by state and federal law. Develop a comprehensive public-private agreement template of the possible organizational/ownership structures for any proposed broadband infrastructure components between potential network owners and other potential business partners.
- f. Technical Broadband Development and Deployment Project Plan: Building on the work completed in items a. through e. above, develop a technical broadband development and deployment project plan that includes: an assessment of service territories, backhaul routes, interconnection points, suggested routes, capacity, providers, technical and delivery models, market analysis, expansion strategies, cost estimates, funding resources, best practices, and other appropriate factors to address barriers at local and regional levels, with an emphasis on unserved and underserved areas.

3. ADOPTION AND UTILIZATION PLAN:

- a. Gap Analysis: Evaluate the current environment affecting adoption and utilization identifying key issues limiting broadband expansion - for households, businesses and institutions. Explore obstacles and barriers impacting current and future usage. Identify all stakeholders defined in the project who are appropriate participants in the solution implementation based upon current success and programs, as well as potential future programs and services. Determine the economic and community impact of broadband issues, the universe of potential users, and the presentation of potential opportunities achieved through the implementation of the plan.
- b. Broadband Deployment Strategies to Address Adoption and Utilization: Develop a communications and outreach strategy to engage public and private stakeholders, internet service providers and related partners and groups. Identify the targeted agencies or partners best positioned to deliver, determine potential existing examples and resources, along with high level cost/benefit analysis. Propose any necessary solutions needed to increase adoption and utilization including but not limited to support programs and services that could be delivered identifying the recommended anchor institutions.

4. FUNDING FOR ACCESS AND ADOPTION/ UTILIZATION

Both plans (Access Plan and Adoption/Utilization Plan) must detail strategies that would assist the Broadband Taskforce in **identifying, applying for, and obtaining** needed funds from targeted broadband-specific funding programs, both public and private, best matched to the solution design presented. The funding plan should outline fees for any services provided by the vendor or agent, for any and all grant writing support, or, should include similar information from a referral or partner

agency that provides such services. The Broadband Taskforce is anticipating applying for available state and federal funds when notices are issued and will use the plans created and will be seeking a partner to assist in these applications. The Funding Plan should include steps, funding sources, grant writing resources, and recommendations based on past successes. If funding applications become available during the masterplan engagement, the County would expect the vendor/agent engaged to be prepared to support the application process with any preliminary work already completed. As noted above, this would potentially be completed by the agent, or, through the recommended third party.

5. SUSTAINABILITY PLAN:

Identify and outline a long-term forecast for sustainability (for example a 5, 10, 15 and 25 year or another appropriate phasing plan and timeline). The business sustainability model for the Access Plan and proposed network ownership/ISP solution outlined above should cover all cost and income modeling assumptions for the network ownership solution proposed which could include but not be limited to solutions such as policy only, or expanded to full or partial municipal network ownership and all potential proposed configurations in between. There is no predetermined course of action/ownership at this time.

In addition, outline the sustainability model for the programs, supports and services required in the Adoption and Utilization Plans.

6. COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLAN:

To support the development of access, adoption and utilization, a strategic plan for communication and community engagement needs to be developed. The Task Force will rely on the consulting partner to advise and assist in the development of a best practice communication model. This model will be needed to support the plan development process for recruitment of participants in the needs and use assessments and gap analysis, as well as for the on-going deployment efforts.

7. DELIVERABLES:

The Broadband Plan should include all six components outlined in the Scope of Work, and any additional components recommended by your team and approved by the Task Force. Each component should be clear, succinct and easily interpreted by the Broadband Taskforce which includes individuals with varying levels of technical expertise. Non-technical language and references are preferred for this engagement, though technical information, where appropriate, should be provided as additional, supplemental, or exhibit material. Each plan component may include short-, medium- and long-term phases that will maximize impact in the most efficient manner possible. All materials produced for this engagement will become the property of Champaign County. All materials are to be provided upon the conclusion of the engagement in PDF form as well as in the format originally produced. Additional requests for the provision of materials may be discussed during the engagement.

VIII. PROPOSAL FORMAT

The proposal **must** be organized in the order as described below. To be considered substantive, the proposal must respond to all requirements of this part of the RFQ. Any other information thought to be relevant, but not applicable to the enumerated categories, should be provided as an appendix to the proposal.

Proposals should include at minimum:

1. Brief company history and description, including size and number of employees. Compliance with minimum qualifications in Section III.
2. Name of Project Manager, resumes for project team members, and relevant certification information.
3. Conflicts of Interest: Provide any information on prospective conflicts of interests, including existing or financial relations with equipment vendors, ISPs or other firms or with any representative (official, employee, or agent) of the County of Champaign.
4. References: Include at least three but no more than five, references from previous similar projects. Provide a brief description of the project, the timeframe for completion (actual dates), the cost of the project, the project team member(s) involved, and the contact information for the reference.
5. Detailed work plan to complete the entire Scope of Work to include:
 - a. List tasks to be accomplished and the budget hours to be expended for each task and subtask. (This will be used as a work plan and managing tool for basis of invoicing.) There will be a minimum of one initial, one final, and monthly status meetings required to be included in the work plan in addition to any regular input/review meetings. At least one public presentation in front of the County Board or other public forums should be anticipated to close out the project.
 - b. Identify project timeline with deliverables and key milestones.
 - c. Outline the project management approach that your company will employ to execute this project and identify individual(s) responsible for the various areas in the outline.
 - d. Identify areas of risk for all aspects of the consulting engagement including but not limited to financial, legal, organizational, human resources, etc.
6. Fee schedule: Provide detailed cost estimate of the project, including known project expenses, professional hourly rates and multipliers and estimated service/task hours with a "Not to Exceed" cap. Other ancillary expenses related to the completion of the study will be discussed on a case-by-case basis.
7. Commit to working closely with the Broadband Taskforce and outline specific requirements and expectations of this committee or other local resources including noting knowledge and local expertise areas needed, estimated time commitments from critical partners, etc. Clearly define any assumptions for the provision of information,

materials, or research by the Taskforce members, and which member or resource you anticipate will provide the materials. This should include an identification of local resource roles, areas of expertise, and schedule of anticipated time commitments that are anticipated from critical parties in Champaign County to ensure a successful completion of the engagement. If survey work or local data collection is anticipated, please provide details on experience in this area and the requirements of the Taskforce that will be needed to complete.

8. An explanation of what distinguishes the services the submitting firm can provide from other firms.

IX. TIME SCHEDULE

The County has established the following timetable which is tentative and is subject to revision during the process of review and selection by the County.

June 28, 2021	Request for Proposal Posted and Advertised
July 16, 2021-1:30pm	Proposals Due
July 16, 2021 – 2:00pm	Proposals Opened – <i>Shields-Carter Meeting Room, Brookens Administrative Center, 1776 East Washington, Urbana, IL</i>
July 19-28, 2021	Presentations by Finalist Firms to Evaluation Team
July 30, 2021	Selection of Top Ranked Firm by Evaluation Team
August 2-6, 2021	Negotiation of Agreement with Selected Firm
August 10, 2021	Recommendation for Budget Amendment to County Board Committee of the Whole
August 19, 2021	Board Approval of Budget/Award of Contract