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REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS: 21-7-22-10

## **REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)**

### **PARTNERSHIP FOR BROADBAND EXPANSION OF SERVICES FOR GREENE COUNTY, OHIO**

**ISSUE DATE:** 22 July, 2021

**SUBMISSION DATE:** September 27, 2021 and 12:00 PM (Local Time)

**SUBMISSION LOCATION:** Greene County Department of Development  
61 Greene Street  
Xenia, Ohio 45385  
(937) 562-5007

**RFP POINT OF CONTACT:** Eric Henry, Director  
Greene County Department of Development  
[ehenry@co.greene.oh.us](mailto:ehenry@co.greene.oh.us)

PLEASE CONTACT THE GREENE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT  
FOR ASSISTANCE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE IF YOU ARE A PERSON WITH A  
DISABILITY NEEDING A REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION TO PARTICIPATE  
IN THIS PROCUREMENT PROCESS.

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## PROJECT OVERVIEW

Greene County seeks a qualified and willing public or private partner to (1) assess the current availability of broadband internet services, (2) design a plan for the construction of an expanded network to address the deficient areas within the County, and (3) partner with the County to construct the required middle mile and last mile infrastructure. This infrastructure will provide broadband services in the areas of the County not currently served or currently underserved. The purpose of the Request for Proposals (RFP) is to receive proposals from interested partners who have the technical expertise, resources, and capacity to design and construct broadband infrastructure and to provide access to retail service operations that will support increased and dedicated broadband connectivity that exceeds FCC minimum standards to the areas of the County not meeting the minimum qualifications of 25 Mbps of download and 3 Mbps of upload.

Project goals include:

1. Assess current access to broadband with available speeds and identify current/ongoing gaps in service for unserved and underserved areas of the County
2. Develop a proposed system design that:
  - a. Remediates unserved and underserved areas of the County with a minimum speed of 50 Mbps download and 10 Mbps upload
  - b. Identifies the infrastructure needed to support the delivery of leading-edge broadband services consistent with the proposed design
  - c. Supports the operational needs of individuals and businesses through a platform of high-speed internet services
  - d. Establishes the conditions that strive to offer a competitive rate structure for the products and services delivered to end users over the network, such as a fixed rate structure for a dedicated time frame to ensure all residents will have affordable access to the system
  - e. Uses all available technology options to deliver a sustainable infrastructure that is as robust and flexible as is practical
3. Establish Greene County as being at the forefront of the most connected communities in Ohio, the region, and the nation
4. Provide flexibility such that the system design may be implemented as a whole or in phases
5. Provide for long-term service delivery to end users with a high-quality product and superior customer service
6. Address potential partnerships with organizations that would assist residents in subscribing to the broadband system, as well as financing those subscriptions to close the gap for those residents in unserved and underserved areas.
7. Implement as expediently and professionally as possible without compromising the integrity of the project
8. Full transparency
9. Sustainable on a long-term basis

Proposals will be evaluated for evidence of the respondent's ability to meet the stated project goals, including the aggressive timeline, and to implement a designed system pursuant to the

scoring criteria listed in this RFP and a formal presentation if selected as a finalist. The identified partner will move forward with negotiations to enter into an agreement with the County to begin implementation of the scope of work identified in this RFP and the negotiated terms.

## **BACKGROUND**

Access to reliable and affordable broadband internet connectivity is not a new issue for Ohio’s families and small businesses. The desire to connect all citizens has been a goal identified as a central pillar of economic development, job growth, infrastructure improvements, technological innovation, energy security, and quality of life in America by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in “A Case for Rural Broadband” (April 2019). Similarly, Governor Mike DeWine has expressed support for broadband expansion in Ohio through the creation of the office of Broadband Ohio and through the 2021 funding of a \$250,000,000 grant program.

The COVID-19 pandemic fully exposed the deficiency of broadband connectivity in Ohio. Accessible and affordable broadband options are a lifeline to education, healthcare, and employment. In areas where the digital divide is greatest, citizens are disconnected from services vital to health and welfare. Extended infrastructure needs and lower population densities create unique challenges for private industry to deliver services within an affordable framework on its own. Providing connections to unserved or underserved areas is vital to the region’s future.

Greene County, Ohio (with special emphasis on the eastern portion of the County) is a geographic region comprised of 416 square miles and a population of approximately 169,000 people. Bordering Dayton, Ohio, in southwestern Ohio, Greene County hosts a diverse geography that includes urban, suburban, and rural communities, as well as industrial, commercial, and agrarian economies.

### *Greene County*

Demographic and geographic information available at:

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/greencountyohio/INC110219>

<https://www.greencountyohio.gov/633/Maps>

## **SCOPE OF SERVICES**

The County is seeking a public or private partner to provide enterprise-grade internet services to individuals and businesses located in currently unserved or underserved areas to meet needs requiring broadband connectivity. The County expects the partner to provide a full “turnkey” solution for the delivery of products and services that include: assessment of current conditions, design, engineering, procurement, permitting, construction, operation, maintenance and repair,

and regulatory compliance network. The designed network should also be adaptable for future growth and technology. The proposed solution should be consistent with the project goals listed in section three (3) of this RFP. Any system design must, at a minimum, provide speeds consistent with the FCC definition for broadband (25 Mbps download/3 Mbps upload) but should strive to exceed this minimum standard.

The proposed solution must include coordination with cities, townships, and villages in Greene County to identify existing and proposed publicly owned infrastructure for potential network routes and interconnection points to best achieve the goal of providing all Greene County residents access to a reliable broadband network.

## **PROPOSAL SUBMISSION**

The Greene County Department of Development will receive sealed hardcopy proposals until 12:00 PM (local time) on September 27, 2021. Only those proposals received prior to or on the submission date and time will be formally considered.

Questions relating to definitions, interpretations, information, and/or requests for clarification must be made in writing on or before September 17, 2021 at 12:00 PM (local time) and directed via e-mail to:

Eric Henry, Director  
Greene County Department of Development  
[ehenry@co.greene.oh.us](mailto:ehenry@co.greene.oh.us)

No questions will be accepted after the deadline for questions has passed. Responses to questions or requests for clarification regarding this RFP will be issued in writing as an addendum and posted at:

<https://www.greencountyohio.gov/1568/Department-of-Development>

Any such addenda shall be issued by September 20, 2021 at 12:00 PM (local time) and shall be considered part of the RFP.

All hardcopy proposals should outline the interested parties' qualifications and ability to meet the goals, objectives, and requirements illustrated below. To achieve a full, fair, and uniform review process, all proposals must include six (6) hardcopy originals and one (1) electronic copy of the proposal that include the following components in order to be judged responsive to this RFP:

- A. Section 1: Provide a Letter of Transmittal on company letterhead stating why the respondent is interested in developing a partnership with the County and provide a listing of any requirements listed in this RFP that it is unable to meet.
- B. Section 2: Provide an overview of the respondent’s organization, services, partners, resources, and capabilities that provides details on the company’s (or its shareholders’) knowledge, experience, and operations within the broadband telecommunications industry and, if applicable, infrastructure development in the region as well as key expertise that qualifies it to be considered for this RFP.
- C. Section 3: If a current broadband provider, include an overview of your products and services, operations, total subscriber count, type of services (business/residential), local presence in the region, and other markets served including demonstrating any similar agreements with municipalities, electric utilities, or other public-private partnerships.
- D. Section 4: Provide a project organizational chart of the business showing how the initiative will be organized and demonstrating the ability of the business to provide the capital financing required to implement the proposed system design, which should include identification of specific funding contributions and resources required from the County to make the financials viable.
- E. Section 5: Include a detailed narrative that clearly and completely addresses the project goals, objectives, and desired outcomes with particular emphasis and detail given to the information provided in sections three (3) and seven (7) in this RFP and that illustrates an approach designed to be implemented on a County basis.
- F. Section 6: Define the roles and responsibilities for the respondent, the County, and other partners, if any, including any other requirements and define how the proposal will comply with local, state, and federal regulatory requirements.
- G. Section 7: Provide a minimum of three (3) industry/municipality references that demonstrate the respondent’s ability to successfully assess, plan, implement, and deploy broadband network products and services using innovative public and/or private environments.
- H. Section 8: Provide any additional information, documentation, and/or materials illustrating the qualifications and ability of the proposer to meet the goals, objectives, and requirements outlined in this RFP.

## **SELECTION PROCESS**

The Broadband Expansion RFP Review Committee will evaluate the submitted proposals on the following criteria to determine the top three (3) finalists:

- Relevant experience and qualifications.....25 points
- Overall quality and completeness of submission.....20 points
- Financial soundness and capability to meet RFP goals and objectives.....15 points
- Narrative addressing goals, objectives, and requirements.....15 points
- Responses from references.....10 points

- Private funding and proposed schedule/timeline.....15 points

The Broadband Expansion RFP Review Committee may, at its discretion, request any or all respondents to clarify information presented in the submitted proposal.

The recommended proposal submission will be determined by the Committee following a formal presentation by the top three (3) finalists. The formal presentations to the Committee should highlight the ability to meet the goals and objectives as provided in the proposal as well as any additional information relevant to consideration that may include but is not limited to:

- Relevant market studies/analyses
- General fiber infrastructure design examples from past projects
- Proposed project timeline for analysis, design, construction, and end user subscription
- Residential expansion capabilities and desires
- Financing capacity/Proformas
- Proposed team with illustration of experience and qualifications of each member
- Illustrations of unique qualifications, skills, and/or value to the project

Once a provider has been selected, the County and the provider will enter into the negotiation period to refine the vision for and scope of the project and to finalize the terms of an agreement. Once the agreement is approved, the County expects project work to begin immediately. The construction timeline will depend somewhat on the partnership developed with the successful respondent; however, the respondent should be prepared to meet aggressive timelines for design, build-out, and activation of the network. It should be noted that the project does not consider wireless, unlicensed, or fixed licensed a suitable sole option for long-term sustainability for meeting its broadband needs. However, providing wireless offerings in conjunction with a core hardline service connection may be considered, and in some cases, desired.

The final contract or agreement shall be subject to approval by the Greene County Board of Commissioners.

## **DISCLAIMERS**

Greene County reserves the right to evaluate all submitted proposals and to move forward with the submission deemed to be in the best interest of the County. The County may, in their sole and absolute discretion, accept or reject, in whole or in part, for any reason whatsoever any or all proposals; re-advertise this RFP; postpone or cancel at any time the RFP process; waive any informalities or irregularities in the process; negotiate with any party; and/or request additional information if it so desires.

Proposals not submitted on time and/or that do not conform to the RFP requirements will not be considered. The County may determine, at its sole discretion, whether any aspect of the proposal satisfies the criteria established in this RFP. In all cases, the Greene County Board of

Commissioners shall have no liability to any contractor for any costs or expenses incurred in connection with this proposal or otherwise.

The County will allow a proposer's representative bearing proper authorization and identification to sign for, receive, and withdraw the proposer's unopened proposal prior to the submission deadline. A firm wishing to modify his/her proposal may do so by withdrawing the initial submission and then submitting a modified proposal prior to the deadline. Neither the staff nor the facilities of the County will be available to assist a proposer desiring to make modifications. It will be the proposer's responsibility to make all modifications. The County may conduct discussions with persons submitting proposals for the purpose of clarification to assure full understanding of and responsiveness to the solicitation requirements. The County reserves the right to cease all contract preparation activities at any time and to reject all proposals if such action is determined to be in the best interest of the County.

The issuance of this RFP and any subsequent response by a respondent does not create a binding obligation on the part of the County to enter into any form of agreement or contract or to pay any costs assisted with the preparation of responses or submittals with the respondent for the development of a broadband network, delivery of products and services, or otherwise. Nor shall the RFP in any way create an association, partnership, or joint venture among the respondents and the County.

The County will not pay for any information requested, and all responses submitted become the property of the Greene County Board of Commissioners. Responses will not be returned and may be subject to disclosure pursuant to state open records statutes. If a respondent believes that any portion of its response includes proprietary or other confidential information, it must be clearly labeled "Confidential Information," and the respondent must state the basis for the claim to confidential treatment. To the extent permitted by law, the County will treat such information as confidential and will not disclose it to a third party without prior notification and authorization.