

**Request for Proposals
For
Regional Broadband Feasibility Study**

Proposals

Accepted until October 19th, 2020 at 2:00 PM ET

Eastgate Regional Council of Governments

100 E. Federal St.

Suite 1000

Youngstown, OH 44503

Attn: Joann Esenwein, Director of Planning

LEGAL NOTICE

Sealed Proposals will be accepted until **October 19th by 2:00 PM ET**, at Eastgate Regional Council of Governments, 100 E. Federal St. Youngstown, OH 44503.

Each team shall submit a total of six (6) copies of the Proposal, along with a digital copy on a USB Drive in a sealed envelope marked on the outside “Regional Broadband Feasibility Study”.

We are an Equal Opportunity Employer.

BY ORDER OF THE
Executive Director, Eastgate Regional Council of Governments

James Kinnick, P.E.

NEWS PRESS/POSTED **Monday, September 21st, 2020**

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

For

Regional Broadband Feasibility Study

Introduction

The Eastgate Regional Council of Governments is issuing a Request for Proposals seeking the services of a consultant/firm to perform a Broadband Feasibility Study for the three-county region. A selection committee, comprised of stakeholders from each county, will then review the proposals and select from those bids the best proposal.

The selected consultant will be commissioned to put together the Study with a focus on providing enhanced and reliable Broadband Internet Service to rural areas lacking appropriate coverage, as well as urban centers that require increased speed and access. Eastgate, along with its partners from Ashtabula, Mahoning, and Trumbull County, will work in tandem with the consultant to ensure the completion of the Study to the satisfaction of the review committee, as well as provide any technical assistance that might be necessary. Upon completion, Eastgate will pursue the implementation goals outlined in the Study and seek further funding (from grants and other local sources) to do so.

General Scope of Services

The scope of work to be performed by the consultant is as follows:

1. Technology and Trends Review. Conduct a review of current trends in telecommunications technologies and the industries they support. Assess what will be required to develop any forthcoming broadband network and the predicted material lifespan to safeguard against obsolescence.
2. Policy Analysis. Completion of a review of the current and forthcoming legislative and regulatory policy will also be performed to ensure that the proposed public network and service complies with and accounts for any statutes that govern how public broadband is regulated.
3. Service and Infrastructure Analysis. Complete an analysis of the incumbent Internet service providers (ISPs) and existing broadband infrastructure in the region. Provide a clear picture of the state of broadband in the study area and how any forthcoming network will fit into that landscape. Analysis should identify service models that could be utilized in the region. Outcomes will include GIS maps detailing the physical extent of fiber-optic lines, service areas, incumbency, and level of service provided.
4. Site Analysis. Complete a site analysis to discover whether existing public assets and/or land can be used to better facilitate network construction and operation.

5. Market Analysis. Complete a market analysis to serve as the basis for determining penetration and adoption rates, foreseeable competition, and sensible pricing for services provided.
6. Needs Assessment and Outreach. Complete a needs assessment for larger-scale use of broadband for area businesses, industrial/manufacturing industries, and other anchor economic development institutions. Receive and take into consideration stakeholder concerns and input and ensure the needs of the business community are known and met. This will be facilitated using Online surveys, community anchor interviews, enterprise business interviews, and small and medium business interviews. The information gleaned from this outreach effort will then be considered alongside a review of broadband improvement efforts that have already occurred regionally and throughout Ohio.
7. Utility Formation Study. Prepare, assess, and plan for creating an entity to govern the network once it has been completed and provide service to customers. Eastgate will work in tandem with Ashtabula, Mahoning, and Trumbull County, as well as a consortium of political subdivisions as a cooperative to construct and maintain the physical network and provide Internet service. Examine processes and the delineation of what will be required--both in terms of finances and physical footprint-- to successfully own and operate a public broadband utility.
8. Programming and Finance Evaluation. Evaluate financing options that are available to the region for funding the construction, implementation, and subsequent operation of the network. Develop a cost model for the network, including one-time and ongoing capital expenditures; operations, network operations, field services, staffing, billing, and customer service. Delineate items such as customer growth rates, competitive pricing schedules, and overall financial sustainability. It is important to note that all programming and financing evaluations should be focused on the operation by eligible entities including units of government, non-profits, colleges, and universities, for example.
9. Project Identification. Develop a set of initial projects for the region to embark upon to begin the creation of the fiber-optic network. These projects will consider all the information gathered so far concerning the existing fiber-optic infrastructure, any gaps in the same, and the overall landscape of broadband in the region. A result of which is, a comprehensive determination of how these projects may be deployed, financed, and sustained.
10. Final Report. Develop a final report. As a result, the Eastgate region will be equipped with the impetus and tools necessary to proceed with more concrete and actionable steps toward the implementation of publicly owned and -operated fiber-optic broadband.

Project Deliverables

- Broadband and Cable infrastructure strategic technology implementation plan
- Recommend and prioritize projects based on studies above for both rural areas and urban centers
- Investigate and recommend funding sources that include local, state, federal, and private opportunities.
- Detailed analysis of potential models for a publicly owned network and expected detailed evaluation for review
- Evaluate public-private partnerships for each county and how it would work.

Proposal Contents

The objective is to enter into a contract with a Consultant to provide the above-referenced Work.

Minimum Qualifications

In this section, provide documentation that the Consultant has at least two years' experience performing Comprehensive Plan Studies.

Failure to meet these minimum qualifications will cause the Proposal to be considered non-responsive, and it will be removed from further consideration.

Section A. Vendor's Experience/ Available Staff's Experience

In this section of the Proposal, provide information regarding the Consultant's experience with Broadband related development, implementation, and planning.

Provide the resumes of the key personnel (prime and/or subcontractor) capable of providing the services across each scope of work item and project deliverable. Please also include an organizational chart identifying the name, title, and firm for each key staff member and how the project team will interact with Eastgate.

Section B. Project Scope of Work

In this section of the Proposal, describe your proposed approach to the project and your methodology for providing the services. Take this opportunity to specify any unique characteristics that may distinguish you from other potential consultants for these services. Please include a timeline for each activity and limit your response to **ten** pages.

Section C. Other Categories

In this section of the Proposal, submit internet addresses of favorable reviews of the Coordinator's work, providing the similar services offered to Eastgate. Provide other relevant information that was not illustrated in the previous two sections.

Proposal Evaluation Criteria

A selection committee will rank each item of the Proposal based on the maximum possible points listed below. Listed categories will be evaluated by each member of the selection committee.

There is no category for rating a narrative approach on its merits. A narrative approach may be considered, where appropriate, to expand a consultant's explanation regarding any of the following evaluation categories.

A. (Up to 30 points) "Coordinator's Experience" / "Available Staff's Experience"

Consider the Coordinator's experience within the past 3 years with the type of service offered to Eastgate. Review the references provided by the consultant and evaluate the firm in each of the following categories:

- Quality of services provided
- The relevance of the services provided to the project's mission, goals, and main priorities
- Consider the resume of the key personnel in each applicable area of services to be authorized.
- Evaluate the "Available Staff's Experience" in the following categories:
 - The project manager or lead
 - Additional experiences relevant to the outlined scope of work and project deliverables

B. (Up to 50 points) "Project/Contract Methodology"

Evaluate each firm based on its proposed methodology for the execution of this contract. Consider each firm's understanding of the purpose and scope of this project/contract. Evaluate the soundness of the strategy and actionable items; assess how achievable the deliverables are for the contract period.

C. (Up to 20 points) "Other Evaluation Categories"

Evaluate each vendor based on the favorable internet reviews provided by the vendor and any additional information relevant to the proposed project. This may include, but is not limited to, innovative ideas and previous experience of working in the Eastgate Region.

Requirements for the Proposals:

Instructions for Preparing and Submitting a Proposal

1. Provide the information requested in the Request for Proposals Content in the same order listed, in a letter signed by an officer of the firm. Do not send additional forms, resumes, brochures, or other materials.
2. Proposals shall be limited to fifteen (15) 8½" x 11" single-sided pages.
3. Please adhere to the following requirements in preparing and binding letters of interest:

- a. Please use a minimum font size of 12-point and maintain margins of 1" on all four sides.
- b. Page numbers must be centered at the bottom of each page.
- c. Use 8½" x 11" paper only.
- d. Bind proposals by stapling at the upper left-hand corner only. Do not utilize any other binding system.
- e. Do not provide tabbed inserts or other features that may interfere with machine copying.

Each Team shall submit a total of six (6) copies of the Proposals in a sealed envelope marked on the outside "Proposals for the Regional Broadband Feasibility Study", as well as a digital copy on a USB Drive.

Eastgate will accept Proposals until **2 PM, Monday, October 19th**, at the Director of Planning's office, 100 E. Federal St. Youngstown, OH 44503

Eastgate retains the option of rejecting or accepting any RFP.

Schedule

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| 1. Request for Proposals (RFP) Advertisement: | September 21st |
| 2. Proposals due: | October 19th |
| 3. Proposal Review completed | October 30th |
| 4. Target award date: | November 6th |