



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

REGIONAL BROADBAND FEASIBILITY STUDY

September 30, 2020

Ohio Mid-Eastern Governments Association
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SECTION 1: Basics of the Request for Proposals

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Ohio Mid-Eastern Governments Association (OMEGA) is requesting proposals to conduct a Regional Broadband Feasibility Study for the OMEGA region which includes ten counties: Belmont, Carroll, Columbiana, Coshocton, Guernsey, Harrison, Holmes, Jefferson, Muskingum, and Tuscarawas Counties in Eastern Appalachian Ohio. The purpose of this study is to develop short-term and long-term strategies for broadband expansion throughout the region. The pandemic has exacerbated the need for reliable, affordable high-speed broadband especially for remote learning, telework, telehealth, and e-commerce. This study is being funded through a grant from the US Economic Development Administration (EDA).

1.2 PROCURING AND CONTRACTING AGENCY

This Request for Proposal (RFP) is being issued by OMEGA, which is the sole point of contact during the selection process. The person(s) responsible for managing the procurement process is Jeannette M. Wierzbicki, P.E., Executive Director for OMEGA.

1.3 SCOPE OF WORK

Proposals will need to include the following items in the Scope of Work as well as the CONSULTANT's approach to completion of these work activities.

- A. **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. Areas served by fixed wireless should also be documented. A geographic information system (GIS) map of the ten-county area that includes known fiber assets, fixed wireless, FAA-registered vertical structures, business data (Duns & Bradstreet Data will be provided by OMEGA) and household locations will also be needed. While not all ISPs may provide the data, available fiber records will provide a useful basis for planning and analysis, aiding the project team, informing businesses considering locating in the area, and helping communications companies considering deployments. OMEGA has already developed the base maps showing the published availability of broadband service to the region as provided by Connected Nation (March 2020) and OMEGA will be able to add the layers with this new information along with business locations (data to be purchased by OMEGA), population, and household (by age and income) data by census block group. Consultant will be expected to directly contact ISPs, the FCC, and other agencies for broadband specific data to include any field verification being conducted by Connected Nation or other entities.

- B. Technology and Trends Review.** Conduct a review of current trends in telecommunications technologies and the industries they support. Assess which technologies are most viable to serve the region and to safeguard against obsolescence.
- C. 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.
- D. Needs Assessment and Outreach.** Complete a needs assessment for larger-scale use of broadband for area businesses, industrial/manufacturing industries, schools (K-12 and post-secondary), medical facilities, 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 interviews, enterprise business interviews, and small and medium business interviews. The selected Consultant will interview a cross-section of businesses and “anchor” institutions such as K-12, colleges and universities, healthcare, and government. A sufficient number of interviews should be conducted to ensure a representative sampling of the service area to support region-wide extrapolation and validity. OMEGA will provide a purchased database of businesses in the region and will assist with facilitating responses through OMEGA’s existing members and contacts.
- E. Project Identification.** Working with OMEGA stakeholders, develop a prioritized list of projects for expansion of broadband service to unserved and underserved areas. Identify potential ISPs, technologies, funding strategies for project implementation to include potential for public/private partnerships, affordability, financing, and sustainability. OMEGA stakeholders will include the Executive Board, local economic development professionals, representatives of the business community, schools, and hospitals.
- F. Progress Reports.** Consultant will prepare written quarterly progress reports to include major work activities completed, issues of concern, schedule update, and costs.
- G. Stakeholder Meetings.** In conjunction with OMEGA, Consultant will facilitate four stakeholder meetings during the course of the project. These meetings may be conducted virtually or in-person.
- H. Final Report.** Develop a final report so that the OMEGA region will be equipped with the tools necessary to facilitate deployment of high-speed, reliable, affordable broadband throughout the region. Short-term and long-term solutions shall be identified along with associated costs for deployment. Consultant shall prepare a draft report by March 2022 for review by OMEGA with the final report due by June 1, 2022.
- I. Final Presentation.** Consultant will conduct a final presentation documenting the results and recommendations of the study at an OMEGA Executive Board Meeting. The final presentation to the OMEGA Executive Board shall be no later than the June 2022 meeting.

1.4 QUESTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

Any questions concerning this RFP may be submitted by email on or before **October 28, 2020** as follows:

Jeannette M. Wierzbicki, P.E.
Executive Director
Ohio Mid-Eastern Governments Association
jeannettew@omegadistrict.org

Entities are expected to raise any questions, exceptions, or additions they have concerning the RFP document or its requirements at this point in the RFP process. If an entity discovers any significant ambiguity, error, conflict, discrepancy, omission or other deficiency in this RFP, the entity should immediately notify OMEGA.

1.5 SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Proposals should be limited to no more than 20 pages including references and qualifications and should include the following:

- Approach
 - Scope of Work
 - Schedule with Milestones
 - Estimated cost of the study
 - Point of contact
 - Qualifications
 - References with contact name, phone number, e-mail address and brief description of work performed
- A. Qualifications, Experience, and Capabilities.** Describe the qualification and capabilities of implementing the scope of services. Include qualifications associated with working with multiple stakeholders particularly in rural and Appalachian areas. Include experience in broadband planning and/or implementation particularly in rural and Appalachian areas along with knowledge and familiarity with socio-economic conditions of the Appalachian Ohio region and the OMEGA region. Include project summaries of relevant projects completed.
- B. Key Staff Assigned to Project.** Include resumes of key staff assigned to this project and provide an organization chart identifying personnel assigned to this proposal, including their roles and anticipated level of involvement. Personnel identified in the proposal must be the principal staff that will work with OMEGA and represent the majority of hours billed.
- C. Company History (if applicable).** Provide overview of company including but not limited to:
- Legal name of business
 - Identification of parent companies, subsidiaries, and affiliates
 - Years in business

- Names, addresses, position of all persons having a financial interest in the company
- State of formation
- Number of employees
- Licenses and certifications relevant to the described work

All proposals are due by **4:00 PM** on **October 30, 2020** by **e-mail only** to:

Jeannette M. Wierzbicki, P.E.
Executive Director
Ohio Mid-Eastern Governments Association
jeannettew@omegadistrict.org

Late proposals will **not** be accepted.

1.6 SELECTION SCHEDULE

<u>DATE</u>	<u>EVENT</u>
September 30, 2020	Issuance of the RFP
October 28, 2020	Last day for submitting inquiries
October 30, 2020	Proposals due
December 9, 2020	Notification of Selected Consultant

SECTION 2: Proposal Procedure & Entity Information

2.1 GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS AND INFORMATION

The evaluation and selection of the Consultant to conduct the Broadband Feasibility Study for the OMEGA 10-county region will be based on the information submitted in the entity’s proposal including estimated cost of study, scope of work, and creativity. Failure to respond to each of the requirements in the RFP may be the basis for rejecting a response. Entities should respond clearly and completely on all requirements. Entities must be as concise as possible with respect to presenting a clear and complete proposal.

2.2 DEVIATION AND EXCEPTIONS

Deviations and exceptions from terms, conditions, or specifications from this RFP shall be described fully on the entity’s letterhead, signed, and attached to the response. In the absence of such statement, the proposal shall be accepted as in strict compliance with all terms, conditions, and specifications and the entity shall be held liable.

2.3 AFFECTIVITY OF OTHER MEDIA

This RFP is the official media governing proposal procedures. No other documents, letters, or oral instructions shall have any influence whatsoever, unless incorporated by reference herein, or unless an official AMENDMENT is made to this document by OMEGA.

SECTION 3: Non-Discrimination

No person in the United States must, on the ground of race, color, national origin, handicap, age, religion, or sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under, any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.

To effectuate compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. Section 2000d *et seq.*); as amended, OMEGA is required to include the following in any solicitation or contract and these provisions will be incorporated into the contract between OMEGA and the selected consultant (CONSULTANT). The CONSULTANT will need to abide by these provisions:

1. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. §§ 2000d *et seq.*) and DOC implementing regulations published at 15 C.F.R. Part 8 prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of race, color, or national origin under programs or activities receiving Federal financial assistance.
2. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (20 U.S.C. §§ 1681 *et seq.*) prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sex under Federally assisted education programs or activities.
3. The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. §§ 12101 *et seq.*) prohibiting discrimination on the basis of disability under programs, activities, and services provided or made available by State and local governments or instrumentalities or agencies thereto, as well as public or private entities that provide public transportation.
4. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (29 U.S.C. § 794), and DOC implementing regulations published at 15 C.F.R. Part 8b prohibiting discrimination on the basis of handicap under any program or activity receiving or benefiting from Federal assistance. For purposes of complying with the accessibility standards set forth in 15 C.F.R. § 8b.18(c), non-federal entities must adhere to the regulations, published by the U.S. Department of Justice, implementing Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (28 C.F.R. part 35; 75 FR 56164, as amended by 76 FR 13285) and Title III of the ADA (28 C.F.R. part 36; 75 FR 56164, as amended by 76 FR 13286). The revised regulations adopted new enforceable accessibility standards called the “2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design” (2010 Standards), which replace and supersede the former Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards for new construction and alteration projects.
5. The Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended (42 U.S.C. §§ 6101 *et seq.*), and DOC implementing regulations published at 15 C.F.R. Part 20 prohibiting discrimination on the basis of age in programs or activities receiving Federal financial assistance.

6. Any other applicable non-discrimination law(s).

SECTION 4: Proposal Evaluation & Acceptance

4.1 EVALUATION AND SELECTION

All qualified proposals submitted in accordance with the terms of the RFP will be evaluated to determine the most responsive entity. A uniform selection process will be used to evaluate all proposals.

OMEGA staff, responsible for this project, will review and evaluate all proposals received in response to this Request for Proposal. OMEGA staff will make a recommendation to the OMEGA Executive Board for review and approval.

4.2 SELECTION CRITERIA

OMEGA will evaluate proposals based upon the following criteria:

- Experience and ability to successfully complete the scope of services
- Knowledge of various technologies to provide broadband services, knowledge of funding mechanisms, knowledge of FCC requirements
- Demonstrated experience with similar broadband planning and/or implementation activities in rural communities
- Familiarity with the Appalachian Ohio region and the ten counties in the OMEGA region
- Ability to complete Scope of Work by June 1, 2022.
- Ability to complete Scope of Work within budget (maximum budget available is \$173,000)

4.3 RIGHTS RESERVED

OMEGA reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to reject all submissions, reissue a subsequent RFP, terminate, restructure, or amend this procurement process at any time. Evaluation criteria contained herein shall be used in evaluating interested firms, groups, or persons for selection. OMEGA may contact any RFP respondent after receiving its submittal to seek clarification on any portion thereof. OMEGA reserves the right to request additional information from any RFP respondent if OMEGA deems such information necessary to further evaluate selection. OMEGA reserves the right to select several consultants to perform task under the contract. All RFP material submitted to OMEGA becomes property of OMEGA and will not be returned to the RFP respondents.