



# REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

## COUNTYWIDE BROADBAND FEASIBILITY STUDY

**August 18, 2021**

Clinton County Board of Commissioners  
46 S. South Street  
Wilmington, Ohio 45177  
Attention: Julie Bolton, Clerk  
Email: [Bolton.JulieL@clintoncountyohio.us](mailto:Bolton.JulieL@clintoncountyohio.us)

## SECTION 1: BASICS OF THE REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Clinton County Board of Commissioners is requesting proposals to conduct a comprehensive Broadband Feasibility Study for Clinton County, Ohio. The purpose of this study is to develop short-term and long-term strategies for broadband expansion throughout the county. The pandemic has highlighted the historic need for reliable, affordable high-speed broadband service, particularly for remote learning, telework, telehealth, and e-commerce.

### 1.2 PROCURING AND CONTRACTING AGENCY

This Request for Proposal (RFP) is being issued by the Clinton County Board of Commissioners, which is the sole point of contact during the selection process. The person responsible for managing the procurement process is Mary Ann Foland, County Administrator.

### 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 county. Provide a clear picture of the state of broadband in the study area and how any forthcoming network(s) will fit into that landscape. Analysis should identify service models that could be utilized throughout the county. Outcomes will include GIS maps detailing the physical extent of fiber-optic lines, service areas, incumbencies, and level of service provided. Areas served by fixed wireless should also be documented. A geographic information system (GIS) map of the county that includes known fiber assets, fixed wireless, FAA-registered vertical structures, business data 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. 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 recognized/appropriate 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 county 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. An appropriate number of interviews should be conducted to ensure a representative sampling of the service area to support county-wide extrapolation and validity. Clinton County will facilitate provision of a list of applicable businesses and organizations in the county and will assist with facilitating responses through allied organizations and contacts.
- E. Project Identification.** Working with Clinton County 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. Clinton County stakeholders will include the Board of County Commissioners, Clinton County Port Authority, Clinton County Regional Planning Commission, local elected/appointed officials, representatives of the business community, schools, and hospitals.
- F. Progress Reports.** Consultant will prepare no less than 3 written progress reports to include major work activities completed, issues of concern, schedule update, and costs.
- G. Stakeholder Meetings.** In conjunction with Clinton County, Consultant will facilitate four stakeholder meetings during the project. These meetings may be conducted virtually or in-person.
- H. Grants.** Research, apply for, and manage external grant opportunities to maximize local investment in the fiber project
- I. Partners.** Seek out public and private partners who will benefit from and invest in the project to achieve the goal of affordable high-speed internet countywide.
- J. Final Report.** Develop a final report so that Clinton County will be equipped with the tools necessary to facilitate deployment of high-speed, reliable, affordable broadband throughout the county. Short-term and long-term solutions shall be identified along with associated costs for deployment. Consultant shall prepare a draft report within 180 days from the commencement of the agreement for review by Clinton County with the final report due not later than 30 days from receipt of the draft report.
- K. Final Presentation.** Consultant will conduct a final presentation documenting the results and recommendations of the study at a public meeting of the Clinton County Board of Commissioners. The final presentation shall be no later than 2 Weeks from Final Report Submission, coincidental with a regularly-scheduled Board of County Commissioners Meeting.

## 1.4 QUESTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

Any questions concerning this RFP may be submitted via **bidexpress.com** on or before **(September 8, 2021)**. **Inquiries must be made through Bid Express. No questions will be answered if submitted through any other method.**

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 Clinton County, through the means articulated above.

## 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 – please list scope components, and associated cost for each component
  - 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 the organization/team with respect to implementing the scope of services. Include qualifications associated with working with multiple stakeholders, particularly in rural areas. Include experience in broadband planning and/or implementation particularly in rural areas, along with knowledge and familiarity with socio-economic conditions of communities similar to Clinton County. Include project summaries of relevant projects completed.
- B. Key Staff Assigned to Project.** Include resumes of key staff from the organization/team 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 Clinton County and represent the majority of hours billed.
- C. Company History (if applicable).** Provide overview of company/companies including but not limited to:
- Legal name of business(es)
  - 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 **3:00 PM** on **(September 15, 2021)**. Anyone interested may download specifications by registering for a free account at <https://bidexpress.com>. Proposals are to be electronically submitted through the <https://bidexpress.com> service (fees Apply) prior to the above state time. **No paper bids will be accepted.** Late proposals will not be accepted.

## 1.6 SELECTION SCHEDULE

<u>DATE</u>	<u>EVENT</u>
August 25, 2021	Issuance of the RFP
September 8, 2021	Last day for submitting inquiries
<b>September 15, 2021</b>	<b>Proposals due</b>
September 29, 2021	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 Clinton County 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 Clinton County.

## 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, Clinton County is required to include the following in any solicitation or contract and these provisions will be incorporated into the contract between Clinton County 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.

Clinton County staff and partner organizations responsible for this project, will review and evaluate all proposals received in response to this Request for Proposal. Clinton County staff will make a recommendation to the Clinton County Board of Commissioners for review and approval.

### **4.2 SELECTION CRITERIA**

Clinton County 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 communities of a similar size and demographic profile as Clinton County
- Ability to complete Scope of Work within the time frame stipulated in Section 1.3
- Ability to complete Scope of Work in a cost-effective manner.

### **4.3 RIGHTS RESERVED**

Clinton County 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. Clinton County may contact any RFP respondent after receiving its submittal to seek clarification on any portion thereof. Clinton County reserves the right to request additional information from any RFP respondent if Clinton County deems such information necessary to further evaluate selection. Clinton County reserves the right to select several consultants to perform task under the contract. All RFP material submitted to Clinton County becomes property of Clinton County and will not be returned to the RFP respondents.