

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR RURAL BROADBAND DEPLOYMENT

CENTRE COUNTY



Proposals Solicited by:

SEDA-Council of Governments
201 Furnace Road
Lewisburg, PA 17837

Dates of Publication: November 22nd, 2021
Contact: Scott Kramer, SEDA-COG

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

SEDA-Council of Governments (SEDA-COG) is requesting proposals for broadband deployment from Internet Service Providers (ISP) and Wireless Internet Service Providers (WISP), to expand broadband service in and around the Snowshoe area within Centre County. The purpose of this RFP is to provide a minimum of 100/100mb service to businesses and residents within the project areas. The selected proposal will be eligible to apply for up to \$210,000 in reimbursable grants funded in part by the Appalachian Region Commission (ARC) and the Keystone Communities Program.

Complete proposal details, including the required proposal format, may be obtained by contacting:

Scott Kramer
SEDA-COG
201 Furnace Road
Lewisburg, PA 17837

Proposal details are also available under the Request for Proposals section of What's Happening on SEDA-COG website. www.seda-cog.org.

Proposals will be accepted until 2:00pm prevailing time, Thursday, December 30st, 2021, at which time they will be publicly opened at the offices of SEDA-COG. Proposals shall be on the forms required, sealed, and clearly marked on the outside, "CENTRE COUNTY RURAL BROADBAND DEPLOYMENT PROPOSAL," and submitted to:

Scott Kramer
SEDA-COG
201 Furnace Road
Lewisburg, PA 17837

Proposals that are faxed or e-mailed to SEDA-COG cannot be accepted.

SECTION I: PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Under this project, SEDA-COG, in cooperation with Centre County, will establish a reimbursable grant fund for the purpose of incentivizing ISPs/WISPs to provide a minimum of 100/100mb service for businesses and residents within the project areas.

The majority of the build-out must serve economic development interests, which can have a wide range of applications, from traditional commercial business enterprise and manufacturing, to agriculture businesses and cottage industries. As a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic, working from home, distant learning, and tele medicine will also be targeted for this project. A secondary focus can include serving residential areas, which should ideally be in conjunction with servicing economic development activities.

Proposals will be judged based upon the ISP capacity, target service speed of 100/100mb symmetrical to business and residential households, the extent of the coverage that they are able to deliver, the pricing for services, and the ability to invest their private sector capital and other investments, which may include assets already in place, in-kind services, and cash equity.

The primary scope of this project involves:

1. Equipment, lease payments, lease of land or vertical assets, and engineering costs are eligible for funding. **Construction costs are not eligible for funding.**
2. ISPs/WISPs will be responsible for structural analysis and engineering costs of selected asset(s) identified within the project area.
3. The minimum of 100/100mb service for businesses and residents must be made available to 100% of targeted businesses and 70%-80% of residents within the project areas (***see attachment B***). Extra points to be granted to providers who can:
 - a. Provide speeds greater than 100/100 to businesses and residents; and
 - b. Provide service outside the project area.
4. ISPs are expected to obtain all local review and permitting approvals for the project.
5. SEDA-COG will be taking a lien position on the fixed asset to be financed, in part, with grant funding. The lien will be satisfied in no less than 5 years and a minimum of 100↓/100↑ symmetrical for businesses and households is achieved with affordable rates to the end users.
6. Competitive proposals will include ISPs who commit private sector and other investment.

This project will address the lack of rural broadband infrastructure in the Snowshoe area of Centre County, which is also a predominate problem throughout the region. In addition, it will create interest from multiple providers, thereby creating a competitive environment for broadband access.

SECTION II: PROJECT PARTNERS

The Commissioners and Planning Department of Centre County have been involved with the planning of the target areas and will be involved in the RFP review process.

- **Centre County** - Sections Snowshoe Township along the I80 corridor comprising of 6.8 square mile area containing 7 businesses and 350-360 households.

Detailed maps of the project areas are included in **attachment A**. KMZ data files of the project areas will be available for download on the SEDA-COG website.

SECTION III: PROJECT SCHEDULE

1. All proposals are due by 2:00 pm EST on Thursday, December 30th, 2021.
2. Project implementation schedule and phasing - please provide an estimated project timeline. Timeline should include:
 - a. Estimated project start and end dates.
 - b. Proposed date(s) for pre-project meeting with SEDA-COG and Centre County.
 - c. Proposed date for project completion.
3. ISP/WISP will provide written monthly updates on progress and completed milestones during the work period.

SECTION IV: PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Each proposer shall provide all information herein requested. Limit the proposal to ten (10) pages. Further, no proposal will be considered unless the attached Standard Form is completed in its entirety. Ten (10) copies of the proposal must be submitted to:

SEDA-Council of Governments
Attn: Scott Kramer
201 Furnace Road
Lewisburg, PA 17837

The following will be considered the minimal contents of the proposal:

1. Provide a restatement of the goals, objectives, and project tasks to demonstrate the responder's understanding of the project and your approach to this project. Please reference the Project Description section in your responses.
2. Provide your background and experience in the following areas:
 - a. Coverage Area: summarize your company's current service area footprint and estimated customer size, both residential and business.

- b. Services: describe any direct experience and knowledge your company has in providing residential and business broadband services.
 - c. Partnerships: share your company's experience in working with state and local governments and public-private sector collaborations.
3. Provide any information on prospective conflicts of interests, including existing or financial relations with equipment vendors, ISPs/WISPs or other firms.
 4. Each proposer shall provide a minimum of three (3) references where similar projects have been completed. These projects should be similar in design and scope. Identify key personnel who will conduct the project and provide details of their training and work experience.
 5. Include MBE/WBE certifications and list potential MBE/WBE subcontractors.
 6. ISPs may submit a proposal for each of the county projects areas, however only one county may be awarded to an ISP.

Note: Subcontractors working for the contractor must meet all the requirements of the Request for Proposal (RFP) and any contract between the contractor and the subcontractor must include all contract terms agreed to between the SEDA-COG and the successful contractor.

SECTION V: PROPOSAL EVALUATION

The local project partner team and SEDA-COG will evaluate all proposals using the following criteria to conduct a best-value evaluation:

1. Experience and qualifications of the provider. (20 points)
2. A clear understanding of this project. (15 points)
3. The number of customers to be served. (15 points)
4. Speed of service to be provided. (15 points)
5. Consumer pricing of service. (15 points)
6. Amount of the ISP/WISP other investment i.e.: Land & Cash Equity, Existing Assets, etc. (15 points)
7. Providing service outside the pilot area. (15 points)
8. Timeline to build out from notice to proceed. (5 points)
9. MBE/WBE (5 points)

After evaluating all proposals, the local project partner team, comprised of SEDA-COG, and County representatives may choose to interview the top candidates.

SEDA-COG reserves the right to accept or reject any, and all proposals or to waive any irregularities.

SECTION VI: SELECTION PROCESS

Selection of the ISP/WISP for this project will be based on the criteria noted above. Upon approval, SEDA-COG will enter into negotiations with the selected provider and finalize the project professional services agreement. Should SEDA-COG and the selected provider fail to satisfactorily reach an agreement, SEDA-COG may enter into negotiations with the respondent judged second in the evaluation process or SEDA-COG may re-advertise for proposals.

SECTION VII: PRIMARY CONTACT & KEY DATES

Inquiries concerning any aspect of this RFP and potential contract award should be directed to:

Scott Kramer
SEDA-COG
201 Furnace Road
Lewisburg, PA 17837

Questions and responses will be made publicly available.

Key Dates

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|--|-------------------------------------|
| RFP Release Date | November 22 nd , 2021 |
| RFP Opening Date | December 30 th , 2021 |
| Review Proposals | Week of Jan 3 rd , 2022 |
| Interview Qualified High Scoring Proposals | Week of Jan 10 th , 2022 |
| Select Desired Contractor | Week of Jan 22 nd , 2022 |
| | |

STANDARD ESTIMATE
Centre County Project Area
(Snowshoe Area)

FIRM NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

TELEPHONE: _____

REPRESENTATIVE: _____

Please answer the questions below for project proposal.

Project Area:

- Number of customers to be served _____
- Speed of service to be provided _____
- Amount of ISP/WISP other investment _____
- Consumer pricing of service _____
- Service outside project area Yes ___ No ___ Est #: _____

I, _____, an authorized representative of the above indicated firm, have reviewed, and understand the Rural Broadband Deployment in SEDA-COG's Request for Proposal, and I/we am/are prepared to provide the required services for the above costs.

Signature: _____ Date: _____