QUESTIONS ASKED AND ANSWERED

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS IN RUSH COUNTY, INDIANA

October 8, 2021

1.) What County assets could be made available (Fiber, towers, easements, etc.) for this project? Possible Easements.

2.) Are there any objections to providing a lower price tier (ie. 15Mbps/3Mbps) in addition to the requirement service levels as outlined in the RFP if the consumer prefers? We do not see a reason not allowing that.

3.) What assistance can be provided by the county for land, if needed, to construct towers for underserved areas? It would be a case by case situation where we would have to look at the areas.

4.) Have any recovery fee examples been discussed or considered? Not at this time.

5.) Are there any concerns regarding joint proposals by interested parties? No

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What is the due date for proposal submittals? Page 2 says October 8, but page 5 says October 22.
Typo, should be October 22, 2021

Does the county have a favored technology for Broadband deployment, i.e. fiber or wireless, or will the process be technology neutral? It will be technology neutral.

The ARPA funds are mentioned as a possible funding mechanism. Will all the ARPA funds be available for Broadband deployment or just a portion? Just a portion of the money will be used. This will be determined by the project and area of coverage as we will have multiple companies applying to cover different areas in our county and look at the different types of technology.

Are just the county's ARPA funds available or will the other communities, like Rushville, also be funding this endeavor? Just County

Will a 50x50 Mbps service for $65 per month be acceptable pricing? YES

The RFP requires the number of locations served and at what level? Does the county have this information available, including addresses or geographic locations in a map or list format? We can give them the locations that did speed test

The RFP States the County understands it may need to fund more than one Applicant. How does one applicant know that the county will not fund 2 in the same area lowering the possible income?
We will use matrix point system to look at the solutions that will be provided in the area. We do not see 2 fiber solutions in given town for instance but could still be covered by wireless providers in the area.

Will there be location separation between applicants to prevent duplicity? NO

ARPA rules state 100/100 except where it is not feasible. What criteria are you going to use to determine what is feasible? Fiber can be built to every location with the right money and will guarantee equal coverage, but 25/3 wireless is significantly cheaper to build but will not ensure ubiquitous coverage. Feasibility would be determined by area served, adoption/cost and technology used.

Section 2.1 states 50/10 as the minimum bandwidth. What is correct: 25/3, 50/10, or 100/100?

Since funding is not part of the initial RFP reply, once the RFP is accepted will there be contract negotiations? 50/10 is minimum with capability of 100/100

In Section 2.5, the last sentence says "Applicants shall consider in their responses the ability of the County to potentially enact a recovery fee to recapture its initial investment as allowable by law depending on the funding source(s)." So, is the county's intent that any recipient of funds will be paying

those back to the county over time? If this is a grant, please explain the logic behind this approach? Rush County looks at the recovery fee as a way for a company to invest in our community and help with digital inclusion and show that they are in this for the long run.

In Section 2.6, the county reserves the right to pick any provider for any area. Does the provider have a similar ability? Will the provider have the right to refuse to serve less densely populated areas if another provider gets the more densely populated areas? The companies do not have to do all of Rush County as we understand that some areas could be done with fiber and other areas could be done by wireless.

Please define the surety requirements in more detail. Who chooses the surety type, the county or the provider? This would be negotiated as we finalize an agreement with provider.

In Section 4.3, the county is requiring all routes and towers surveyed by a licensed surveyor and provide the county with GIS maps of the completed project. This is not required on any other type of either state or Federal grant or loan program. Who will absorb this additional and frankly, unnecessary cost? While we might prefer a licensed survey, Rush County understands the purpose was to assure county is getting information about where the provider covers and to have information on hand. If we need to sign an NDA to get the information, then that would be ok.

Section 4.3 also mentions a requirement of daily/weekly updates. Again, both state and Federal programs only require monthly or quarterly updates, so why the additional work and who will cover the added cost of this requirement? Monthly would be fine

Section 4.7 specifies a completion date of September 2024 for the project(s). Given the potential size of the project(s), is this date negotiable? Yes, as stated The County desires that all Rural Broadband Project(s) be completed prior to September 2024, preferably sooner, or by the negotiated date of the contract with the County

Section 8 seems to be overkill for a fiber project. While all middle mile networks are OTDR tested, last mile networks to each subscriber typically are not, due to the short distances involved and the optics utilized. Is this really necessary? What is the intended purpose of this testing? We are looking at time of install of the product to show that it was installed and tested from modem\router. Typically when providers install service, they test it before the leave. We would need like that info for history purposes

Section 8.4 is lacking pertinent details of the test. From where to where? Time of day and day of week? Testing methodology? What determines pass or fail? Test just bandwidth or jitter and latency as well? Unless all these and more parameters are detailed out, this section is mostly useless for any provider. What speed test do they use when they install and verify the connection.

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Why hasn't Rush County been eligible for RDOF or Next Level grant funding? This indicates that the entire county is already receiving 25 x 3 Mbps Broadband services and voice service from an ISP. If not, there might be opportunities to go after them for fraud or other legal ramifications. Additionally, if you had sent out something earlier, then perhaps there would have been some Next Level Connections Phase 3 program funding available.

Watch Communications has taken RDOF and CAFII money indicating that they are serving Rush County with wireless internet service. They have self-reported to FCC. At the request of the Rush County Broadband Task Force, GEO Partners LLC has compiled information from the crowd-sourced data

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speed testing that Rush County did earlier in 2021. We have a number of census blocks that are underserved. The data collected is solid and Watch Communications can be challenged. We have no desire to take legal steps at this time. We want providers who will offer accessible, reliable and affordable internet service to our entire county. In all likelihood, it will be a combination of providers: fiber, wired, and wireless.

We are an all-volunteer task force with absolutely no budget that has worked diligently for over two years to improve the connectivity. Now that Rush County Government has set aside some of the ARPA grant money to partner with providers, we may be able to make some progress. I understand that our timing was not ideal in terms of Next Level Connections Phase 3 applications; however there are more opportunities coming. We welcome your interest and sorry it has not fit your paradigm. I will attach a report that lists the maxim download speeds in each census block. Those underserved are highlighted.

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