

**Hampshire County Development Authority (HCDA) in Cooperation with the Hampshire County  
Broadband Initiative Council Public Private Partnership for Deployment of High-Speed Broadband in  
Hampshire County, WV  
Issued: 11/8/2017**

The Hampshire County Development Authority (HCDA) is seeking responses from potential partners regarding the terms and conditions under which they would participate in a Public / Private Partnership to further develop Affordable Broadband High Speed across Hampshire County.

The HCDA seeks a creative partnership that will meet its current connectivity needs, and that will anticipate potential future needs. The Partner should plan for a long-term relationship with the County, and should base its response on the County's vision and project goals. The County seeks a Partner to offer fast, affordable broadband internet and data services. The County has prioritized a partnership that:

1. Provides the broadband infrastructure to Hampshire County homes and businesses to enable residents, workers, and visitors the opportunity to access affordable, reliable high-speed broadband connections to the internet and other networks; the infrastructure will ideally be capable of 1 Gbps, but the ability to provide the current FCC standard of 25Mbps Down and 3Mbps up will still be a substantial improvement, especially if there is a technological roadmap to higher speeds in the future.
2. Delivers an unfettered data offering that does not impose caps or usage limits on one use of data over another (i.e., does not limit streaming); all application providers (data, voice, video, cloud services) will be equally able to provide their services, and the consumer's access to applications will open the marketplace
3. Considers innovative models, including, but not limited to:
  - a. Homes and businesses (including farms) building their own fiber to the right-of way, either individually or as part of cost-sharing groups
  - b. New or existing providers offering potential fiber/wireless solutions
  - c. Existing providers extending their service areas
4. Considers ways for the County and prospective partners to share financial and operational risks
5. Ensures improved access to all County residents, provide cost-effective services for price-sensitive customers, and provide flexible pricing plans to help narrow the digital divide
6. Substantially improves service to underserved areas within five years.

The Hampshire County Development Authorities preferred technology at a minimum for local businesses when feasible is fiber-to-the-premises (FTTP) deployment but is open to considering hybrid fiber/wireless solutions and last-mile wireless solutions. The County understands, however, that its geography and population density may require creative options for ubiquitous broadband deployment.

Responses to this RFI should state how the respondent's approach will further the HCDA goals of ensuring that residents, businesses, and visitors to our community have access to

affordable, market-leading broadband services.

We are prepared to consider a variety of business models that share technological and operational responsibilities and financial risk between the partners and the HCDA in innovative ways. We encourage respondents to share their expertise, which may be used to shape the direction and form of this potential initiative. Respondents may work together to respond to this RFI. The HCDA is open to creative solutions that will maximize private investment while providing reliable and high-quality services to meet its citizens' needs.

We welcome the responses of all prospective partners, including incumbent service providers, as well as competitive providers, nonprofit organizations, public cooperatives, and entities that are not traditional internet service providers (ISPs) but are interested in acting as a partner in offering service under innovative business models. Nontraditional providers may respond as part of a partnership with an ISP, or may provide separate responses outlining their approaches.

The HCDA is exploring strategies for the structuring of Public-Private Partnership (PPP) opportunities, and/or private sector co-investment strategies. These PPP opportunities can involve collaboration across many functional areas to deploy broadband, including: planning, investment, build-out, network operations and maintenance, marketing, broadband adoption facilitation, and delivery of Internet and other advanced services.

The HCDA is seeking creative solutions for the purposes of construction, operations, and maintenance of an advanced broadband network for:

- (1) The expansion of commercial broadband services to underserved, and unserved, areas of Hampshire County to businesses and residents
- (2) The further development and deployment building on the recently built fiber backbone of 144 strand fiber built in the Capon Bridge area which includes providing maintenance and services to the HCDA Industrial/Tech Park located on Smokey Hollow RD.

C.) SITUATIONAL ASSESSMENT: Studies have expected that up to 60% of the residents of Hampshire County are significantly underserved or have no access to the minimum baseline broadband speeds as defined by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC)

Wired internet services provided by the County's two existing Cable TV franchisees have limited service availability and no interest in expanding services Hampshire County, and the Local Exchange Carriers offers low quality DSL services over their copper line infrastructure which does not meet the FCC's 2015 specification (25Mbps down, 3Mbps up).

In many cases, no Internet service or high-resolution video services of any sort is available to many areas of Hampshire County. Hampshire County topography is rolling, hilly, and heavily wooded. These topographical challenges severely limit the propagation range of the public Wi-Fi bands in the 2.4 and 5 GHz bands where line-of-sight to a tower is required, necessitating more tiers in the distribution network and shorter last-mile loop distances. While the 900 MHz band has better foliage propagation behavior, the channel size and spectrum density limitations make it problematic for offering wide-spread broadband service that meets the 2015 FCC baseline definition. While wireless remains a critical strategic component for delivering broadband to these underserved rural areas, current wireless

technologies are unlikely capable of providing high levels of true broadband penetration without increasing tower capacity in the County by 10 times current levels; a daunting cost with logistical obstacles.

The HCDA will be entering into Public Private Partnership (PPP) for the purpose of developing infrastructure solutions, that could be used as backhaul or middle-mile connectivity points that broadband providers can use for last-mile distribution connectivity to their subscribers in a technology neutral way. These solutions may also include last-mile network facilities that directly pass unserved and underserved homes, businesses, and community institutions. The HCDA has no plans to operate as a network provider or ISP that serves residential homes or commercial businesses, but is instead evaluating a role as an infrastructure owner to partner with such providers to provide services to Hampshire County Residents and Businesses.

To meet the objectives of enabling widespread broadband throughout Hampshire County, such a network would need to be highly reliable, secure, and facilitate interconnection at many points on terms competitive for high-capacity backhaul to retail ISP's. The middle-mile network should reflect an open access network. An open access network offers significant technical and economic incentives to drive last-mile investment, including: a) location of many interconnection points to reduce the length of last-mile lateral deployment; b) diverse range of wholesale services (e.g. speed tiers, lit and dark fiber offerings, point-to-point transport and IP transit); c) affordable rates that reflect competitive prices as seen in high density, urban markets; d) terms that are neutral to all third party and affiliated service providers. The provider(s) of such a network would themselves be encouraged to provide connectivity as a retail ISP as well, but only on terms that are not anti-competitive.

If the provider(s) were also interested in providing consumer residential video services, they would not be required to enter into a separate Franchise Agreement with the County for that purpose but must comply with all ILEC/CLEC restrictions. The purpose of this effort is to identify ideas and/or recommendations regarding how to provide expanded high-speed broadband services via a fiber-optic based, or hybrid fiber/wireless based, open access network for use by internet service providers and commercial businesses serving businesses and residents in Hampshire County. These services will be used to access the Internet for commercial farm based businesses, residential home-based businesses, telecommuting, telemedicine, telehealth, rural economic development, educational purposes, other typical residential uses, and to fill-in the gaps in public safety communications. Beyond the scope as identified above, the HCDA wishes to identify potential challenges, and solutions to, roadblocks, political challenges, creative business solutions, and information on potential technological solutions that will aide to expand broadband access to underserved and unserved areas of Hampshire County.

The HCDA is open to exploring all options available including possible network design configurations, proposed technologies, management capabilities, projected cost variables, the amount the partner(s) would require as a financial match (or use of County facilities as an alternative to financial match, or other "in-kind" contributions), and speed of deployment. Respondents are strongly encouraged to respond to this RFI in full, but the HCDA will entertain responses for only parts of this request that the respondent feels that they can adequately address.

Following the evaluation of responses, the HCDA may issue a more detailed request for proposals (RFP) relating to the County-initiated project, issue an RFP to selected RFI respondents, cancel or delay plans to deploy a network, or choose another direction that is

deemed in the HCDA best interest.

Responding to the RFI is not a guarantee of a contract award. Further, there is no guarantee an RFP will be developed as a result of this RFI. The HCDA reserves the right to withdraw the RFI or any subsequent RFP, or to decline to award a contract.

Vendor's Business Information Firms shall provide the following information with their RFI response.

Utilize this form in your response – Digital Forms available upon request to [hampshiregis@gmail.com](mailto:hampshiregis@gmail.com)

1) Company Name
2) Primary Contact Name
3) Organization Address
4) Contact Telephone Number
5) Contact Email
6) Organization Website
7) Describe the main lines of business at your organization.
8) How many individuals does your organization employ?
9) What is the size of your current customer base for the product you are proposing?
10) What types of customers have you developed similar solutions for?
11) What is your experience with County governments – and do you have any experience with West Virginia counties, cities, or towns? (Provide Minimum 3 References)
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

12) If you are currently a broadband provider, please describe in what capacity you would participate (e.g. as a first, middle, last mile fiber provider, wireless broadband provider, cellular provider, ISP, etc.).

13) What is your interest in, and ability to, provide infrastructure and/or solutions to facilitate broadband availability into Hampshire County?

14) How would you propose to work with the County, and what form would that take?

15) What requirements, optional or mandatory, would be recommended for inclusion in a possible subsequent PPP RFP to select provider(s) for the County to enter into a potential partnership with?

16) What is your willingness, or interest in, partnering with other providers, of which types and on what terms, to be able to offer a more comprehensive solution to Hampshire County?

17) Has your firm investigated any Federal grants that could be used to extend coverage into rural and unserved/underserved areas?

18) What potential business arrangement with the HCDA would you propose that allows for better coverage in unserved or underserved area?

The HCDA will review responses based on the respondents' experience, how well the responses address the County's objectives, how the proposed business model balances and shares risks and rewards, and other factors. The HCDA may provide more detailed information on available assets to one or more respondents, and ask those respondents to refine their responses.