Regional Fiber Infrastructure Feasibility Study

RFP – Questions and Responses

For the week ending September 6, 2013

1. What is the desired schedule for the completion of this Feasibility Study? Is there an expected timeline for the work for this study to be completed in?
   - We are expecting that the study be completed within 120 days from award. This will be discussed with the selected firm and may be modified prior to contracting if it is within the best interest of The Center to do so.

2. How will the implementation of this project be funded? If the Center for Rural Development will be seeking funding from the Department of Commerce Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP), (or any federal funding program) a federal environmental document (Categorical Exclusion or Environmental Assessment) will have to be prepared and submitted to the Department of Commerce. Should the preparation and coordination for a Federal Environment Document (CE or EA) be included in our fee proposal??
   - The funding of the project is not applicable to this RFP and will be addressed when the feasibility Study is complete. No document preparation or coordination, outside of the feasibility study itself, will be expected. However, identification of these and like items, with expected costs, should be included in the study. The Center will work with the selected firm to identify and eliminate funding sources from the study’s research that will have little to no funding potential for the project’s implementation.

3. The RFP does not explicitly mention permitting, but in our experience permits will be required for construction from any number of entities. Should this feasibility study identify the permit requirements and estimate the cost of obtaining these permits? Or, should those permits be obtained as part of the feasibility study?
   - No permits will be obtained at this time, as this is a feasibility study, but Identification of these and like items, with expected costs, should be included in the study.

4. Should this feasibility study assume all new infrastructure will be installed, or should the possibility of using existing, empty conduits and/or IRU’s be investigated??
• These are considerations that should be generally addressed in the study. The purpose of the study is for The Center to be able to identify and consider all such factors. We wish to use this information to make the best informed decisions we can toward implementation.

5. Does the Center have agreements with owners of existing utility poles to allow the installation of aerial cable on those poles? Or will the selected firm be responsible for negotiating and obtaining those agreements at locations where aerial cable may be recommended??

• No. We have no agreements and none will be obtained at this time, as this is a feasibility study, but identification of these and like items, with expected costs, should be included in the study.

6. What level of detail is desired in the route maps prepared? For a “typical” feasibility study mapping can be at a scale of anywhere from 1”: 1 mile to 1: 50 miles. Permit and construction drawings are typically prepared at a scale of 1”:100’ in rural areas, and 1”:50’ in urban areas.

Does the Center have access to existing mapping that could be used to prepare base mapping (at either scale)? Or will the selected firm be responsible for preparing mapping?

With regard to level of detail, do the route maps need to include significant features such as bridges, culverts, curb and gutter, rights-of-way, railroad crossings etc.? These features would be needed for construction drawings, but not necessarily needed for planning level documents?

• The proposed scaling for mapping should be identified by each vendor in their response. We expect “typical” but this could be a factor that distinguishes one proposal over another. Consider, however, that this is a feasibility study and it is not intended to be detailed construction plans.
• We do not have base mapping and would expect construction level maps to be prepared as part of the implementation phases of the project.
• Route maps should identify significant features that may be considered as barriers to implementation or could be considered as excessive/reduced cost factors. Our routes are general in nature to allow the study to identify, compare and contrast preferred paths along these routes.

7. Item “a” states “Detailed route maps for the proposed architecture.” Is there a system architecture document available? If so, can it be provided?

Can you provide the name and locations of the Community Anchor Institutes (CAIs) that will connect to the proposed network?

Will the selected firm be required to coordinate building entrances and prepare construction plans for cable entry into the CAIs as part of this feasibility study?

• There are no system architecture documents available.
• The Center will work with the vendor to identify the most suitable CAIs along the preferred routes.
• The selected firm will not be required to prepare construction plans; as this is a feasibility study. However, identification of these and like items, with expected costs, should be included in the study proposal.

8. Routes I (Cincinnati to Williamsburg) and III (Lexington to Ashland) appear to be on existing interstate corridors; (I-75 and I-64 respectively.) Has the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) given their permission for the fiber optic cable to be in installed in the rights-of-way of these controlled access facilities, or will investigating the use of that ROW with the KYTC be the responsibility of the selected firm?

• No right-of-way agreements (ROW) exists between The Center and any entity. Investigating the use and cost of, but not obtaining, a ROW with the KYTC would be considered highly desirable as part of the study proposal.

9. Optical regeneration is typically necessary approximately every 100km. Have the location of regeneration huts been identified? If so, where will they be constructed? Will the selected firm be required to obtain land use entitlements from local governments and prepare engineered site plans and construction drawings for the regeneration huts?

• No locations have been identified. We do expect the vendor to suggest Optical regeneration points and provide approximate costs for such points. The selected firm for this RFP will not be expected to obtain land use entitlements.

• This is a feasibility study only and therefore no construction drawings are expected.

10. If detailed construction/permit drawings are required with the feasibility study, does the Center have existing design standards or details they would like to use as a basis of design for this project?

• Not applicable.

11. Item “a” states “Detailed specifications for all equipment and outside plant materials...” Should these specifications be prepared to a stage where bids can be obtained?

Has a network architecture been prepared that identifies all of the hardware (equipment) that will be required for the operation of the network? If so, will that be provided to the selected firm? Or, will the preparation of network architecture be required with this project?

Is the purpose of this Feasibility Study to take the plans and specifications to a stage where bids can be received? If so, will the selected firm be involved in the evaluation of the bids and assisting the Center in selecting a contractor?
• The level of detail should be sufficient for The Center to make reasonably accurate assumptions as to preferred manufactures, products and costs.
• This study is for a dark fiber infrastructure only. No equipment or network architecture related to “lighting up” the fiber needs to be included.
• The Center will likely be issuing additional RFPs for detailed design and construction at a future date. The feasibility study will be instrumental in our development of those RFPs. We will not, however, be including the study’s author or any potential contractors as part of that RFP or selection committee.

12. Item “a” Cost estimates for all labor and materials associated with each fiber route.

Does the Center desire a detailed estimate (e.g. with quantities identified and tabulated) or a planning purpose budget?

Please confirm that four estimates (one for each route) are required.

• Budgets should be for planning purposes. Keep in mind that these budgets will be referenced as we secure implementation funding, so their accuracy, although not needed to the exact amount, should be reasonably close and within fairly tight parameters.
• A budget for each route is expected as implementation may take place in phases.

13. Item “d” Cost estimates for operational, maintenance and upkeep for each fiber route.

What are the desired planning horizons (three years, five years, etc.) for these estimates?

• No planning horizons have been established. This may be an item we consider when evaluating the best proposal that meets our needs at the best value offered.