



RFP Information

RFP No. 1933

Evaluation of Broadband Connectivity and Access in Pierce County

Issue Date: August 9, 2017

Closing Date: September 13, 2017

Contact

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Return Proposals by 4:00pm, September 13, 2017 to:

Pierce County Purchasing

950 Fawcett Avenue, Suite 100

Tacoma, WA 98402

Phone: 253-798-7456

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Attachment A: General Conditions of Personal Service Agreements and Contract Compliance

SUBMITTAL DUE DATE

To be eligible for consideration, three (3) copies of a vendor's response to this Request for Proposals (hereafter called "response" or "proposal") must be received by the Pierce County Purchasing Department, 950 Fawcett Avenue, Suite 100, Tacoma, WA 98402 no later than the date and time defined on the front page of this RFP. The response must be submitted in a sealed envelope with the vendor's name, Request for Proposals Number and the due date clearly identified on the outside.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Pierce County, Washington seeks to acquire the services of a contractor to evaluate broadband connectivity in Pierce County and make recommendations on how access and speed could be increased, especially in the rural areas of the county. The evaluation will include an inventory of broadband infrastructure, a review of regulations affecting broadband access and expansion, and potential partnerships or investments that could be made by the county.

The county is located on southern Puget Sound, covers 1,679 square miles (excluding water and federal land), and has an estimated population of 821,300 (2014). The county seat and largest city is Tacoma, located approximately 23 miles from Seattle-Tacoma International Airport. Population in the unincorporated areas of the county is estimated at 381,970 (2014).

The County Council is the policy-making body of Pierce County and consists of seven elected members. The County Executive, who is also independently elected, serves as chief executive officer.

This project is under the guidance of performance audit staff through the County Council's Performance Audit Committee. The Performance Audit Committee is established as the County Council's designee to oversee performance audit activities under Chapter 1.26 of the Pierce County Code. Performance audit staff will manage this project. Prior audit reports can be found at www.piercecountywa.org/performance-audit.

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT

Governmental and proprietary data indicate that 93% of Washington state residents, and 97% of Pierce County residents, have access to broadband internet, defined as 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload speeds. However, many rural residents of the county do not have access to broadband. Further, the term "access" does not necessarily reflect consistency or affordability of service. Several areas of the county, including some urbanized areas, have pockets subject to the "last-mile" problem. Moreover, as the need for connectivity increases beyond 25 Mbps, fiber will increasingly be the best method to deliver broadband internet.

In 2010, the State Broadband Office, part of the State Department of Commerce, was funded through the State Broadband Initiative of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) to map the availability of broadband across the state, create local technology planning teams in nine areas of the state, and develop capacity in state agencies to understand and promote broadband as an element of economic development. Funding for the Office ended in 2014.

Recent bills related to broadband have been introduced at the state level to extend tax credits for investment in broadband in underserved areas, create an executive office on broadband access, authorize PUDs to provide retail telecommunications services, expand broadband planning capacity in rural areas, and authorize rural port districts to operate telecommunications services outside of its district.

In addition to the annual reports of the Washington State Broadband Office from 2010-2014, the state and local jurisdictions have conducted studies of broadband access. In general, these studies noted that cost of building to underserved areas exceeded the potential profitability of providing the service necessary to stimulate private investment alone, and attempted to lay out alternative strategies.

Current Washington state law allows for municipalities to own and operate broadband networks through public utility districts. However, they cannot sell retail access to broadband service to customers, but must sell wholesale access to third party internet service providers. "Home-rule" cities and counties, such as Pierce County, may provide retail telecommunications services as part of their home-rule powers.

CenturyLink and Frontier have made commitments and will receive funding over the next 6 years under the second round of the FCC's Connect America Fund. For Washington State, CenturyLink has committed to provide service to 58,961 homes or businesses and will receive \$24.4 million. Frontier has committed to provide service to 19,713 homes or businesses and will receive \$8.7 million. It is unclear how much of that will be in Pierce County.

Pierce County, Washington seeks to acquire the services of a contractor to evaluate broadband connectivity in Pierce County and make recommendations on how access and speed could be increased, especially in the rural areas of the County, given that each community has distinct characteristics that may require different implementation approaches. This could include options for targeted areas for broadband expansion.

The main objectives are as follows:

1. Create an inventory of broadband infrastructure in Pierce County, including assets such as active fiber, conduit, towers, rights-of-way, or utility poles.
 - a. Classify infrastructure as used, underutilized, or unused.
2. Determine broadband coverage in the County to identify service gaps.
 - a. Identify public and private providers of broadband service in the county.
 - b. Identify levels of service throughout the county and number of providers competing in common areas.
 - c. Identify broadband demand in the county and potential adoption rates.
 - d. Obtain information from existing providers of broadband service (public or private) as to plans for expansion of service.
 - e. Propose options for filling gaps in service countywide, including different technologies, and provide order of magnitude cost estimates for such activity.
3. Identify potential public investments and regulatory reforms that would attract and increase private broadband infrastructure development and "last-mile" service provision.
 - a. Identify financing options including general obligation bonds, revenue bond, public/private partnerships, USDA RUS, other state and federal funding and others where appropriate.
 - b. Review franchise agreements.
 - c. Analyze local regulations to identify changes that could be made to encourage broadband expansion.

4. Evaluate potential partnerships with public and private broadband providers to expand broadband service.
 - a. Identify opportunities that exist with providers and customers to include but not limited to: ISPs, telecommunications companies, public safety networks, cooperatives, statewide telecom networks, government entities, NGOs, K-12 and higher education, library systems, healthcare providers and the industry and business community.

Many other questions can be asked. We look forward to receiving proposals that frame the questions in a constructive way, suggest the proper scope for the project, have clear and relevant objectives, and include appropriate methodologies.

EXPECTED TERM OF RESULTING AGREEMENT

The initial contract period shall be from October 4, 2017 to March 28, 2018, unless sooner terminated as provided elsewhere in the Agreement.

CONTACT

Jana Prince
950 Fawcett Avenue, Suite 100
253-798-7731
jprince@co.pierce.wa.us

CONTRACT DELIVERABLES

1. A detailed work plan submitted to the contract manager for approval within three weeks of the contract start date. The work plan is a crucial document for planning and managing the project. It must include the project scope and objectives, specific tasks, timelines, data requirements, work assignments of contract personnel, and other details.
2. A draft report for internal review, due no later than February 7, 2018.
3. A draft report for internal review by relevant County stakeholders due no later than February 14, 2018.
4. A final report presented to the County Council at a public meeting on March 28, 2018.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR SUBMITTAL

The proposal shall consist of the following sections:

- Transmittal letter summarizing the proposal and mentioning the highlights.
- Technical proposal (see instructions below)
- Management proposal (see instructions below)
- Cost proposal (see instructions below).

The **maximum** length of the above sections (combined) is **15 single-spaced pages**, excluding attachments. NOTE: Clarity and economy of writing style will influence evaluation of the proposals.

Proposals may include attachments of reasonable length, provided that no résumé shall exceed three pages.

As attachments, proposals must include the following documents that can be found in the section below, Contract General Terms and Conditions:

- Required Signature Page for Proposal
- Non-Collusion & Debarment Affidavit
- Subcontractors Participation Form
- Personnel Workforce Data Form

A sample report must be submitted with the proposal. The sample report should be fairly recent and written by a principal member of the team proposed for this project. Ideally, the report should address broadband adoption issues. One hard copy of the sample report is required. In addition, proposers are requested to submit the sample report electronically in Word or Adobe Acrobat files.

While the project will have multiple audiences and stakeholders, the main audience is the County Council Performance Audit Committee. The committee desires a high-quality and useful report that is clearly written and can withstand scrutiny by other experts. Recommendations should be well-grounded. Proposals will be evaluated with these factors in mind.

After a proposal has been selected, the County expects to negotiate the details of the work to be performed, rather than simply accept the proposal and incorporate it into a contract.

If negotiations fail for any reason, the County may choose to negotiate with others. The County is free to reject all proposals and not issue a contract.

1. Technical Proposal

The technical proposal should address the following topics:

1. General approaches to the issues.
2. Draft study objectives.
3. Specific methodologies to address the objectives. Proposers may include technical proposals that offer different levels of service and cost for comparison by the proposal review committee.
4. Draft detailed work plan. Include the project scope, objectives, tasks, sub-tasks, level of effort, schedule, and specific personnel assignments. Be sure to specify any work by Pierce County staff in aid of the contractor's work.
5. Data issues. Discuss the data needed for the project. (County Council staff will manage the contract and, as part of that responsibility, will closely monitor data collection activities.)
6. Other important technical issues.

2. Management Proposal

Key questions to be answered in the management proposal are:

- Who will do the work?
- What is the relevant specific experience of the proposed personnel?
- How will the project be organized and managed?

Describe how the proposer will organize, manage, and report on the status of the project. Indicate who within the organization will have final authority for the work.

Identify the project personnel and succinctly state their qualifications and relevant experience. Include references for each team member (name, identifying information, telephone number, and e-mail address if possible).

Briefly describe previous projects in which the firm was engaged that are comparable or relevant to this project. Identify the main staff on those projects.

If more than one firm is proposed, indicate previous projects on which the firms have worked together.

The following detailed information is required:

1. Name, local address, and phone number of the firm proposed for this contract.
2. The names and number of years the firm has been in business under current or previous names or additional assumed business names.
3. The name and resume of each individual assigned to this project and the individual assigned to backup the primary person in his/her absence and similar information concerning each individual to be provided by subcontract.
4. The name and title of the person authorized to execute a contract on behalf of the firm.
5. A statement outlining any exceptions to the County's requirements or clarifications to the requirements.
6. Any additional services or procedures of benefit to the County not specifically required herein, which the Contractor offers to provide.
7. Provide complete pricing.
8. References listing customers with similar systems or volume requirements.
9. The caption, cause number, Court, Counsel, and general summary of any litigation pending or judgment rendered within the past 3 years against the proposer.
10. Note the extent, if any, to which the firm, association or corporation or any person in a controlling capacity associated therewith or any position involving the administration of federal, State or local funds; is currently under suspension, debarment, voluntary exclusion, or determination of eligibility by any agency; has been suspended, debarred, voluntarily excluded or determined ineligible by any agency within the past 3 years; does have a proposed debarment pending; has been indicted, convicted or has a civil judgment rendered against said person, firm, association or corporation by a court of competent jurisdiction in any matter involving fraud or misconduct with the past 3 years.
11. In addition to any specific requirements requested in this proposal, the following documents must be completed and submitted with the proposal:
 - A. Required Signature Page for Proposal
 - B. Subcontractors Participation Form (Exhibit C)
 - C. Certification of Nonsegregated Facilities and Non-collusion Affidavit and Debarment Affidavit (Exhibit C)
 - D. Personnel Workforce Data Form (Exhibit C)

3. Cost Proposal

The Cost Proposal must include a detailed budget with personnel and other costs. Identify the proposed personnel by name, type of work, number of project days, number of days to be spent working on site in Pierce County, and daily or hourly rates if applicable.

A contract will be negotiated with the successful proposer. Indicate the preferred billing frequency, type of contract, and whether willing to accept a fixed-fee contract.

4. Miscellaneous

Public Disclosure

All materials submitted in response to this RFP shall remain confidential until a contract has been awarded. Thereafter the proposals are public records subject to public disclosure.

Office Locations

- ❑ County Council Office, 930 Tacoma Avenue S, Room 1046, Tacoma 98402

Summary of Anticipated Schedule

Deadline to submit questions on RFP	September 1, 2017, 4:00 PM
Deadline for receipt of proposals	September 13, 2017, 4:00 p.m.
Interviews with finalists (preferably in person, but telephone interviews are possible)	Week of September 25, 2017
Review committee recommendation to award a contract	October 4, 2017
Contract signed and executed	October 4, 2017
Period of performance	October 4, 2017 – March 28, 2018
Contractor draft reports for internal review, with subsequent revisions to be made by the contractor	February 7, 2018 to Council staff, February 14 to relevant stakeholders
Report presented to County Council	March 28, 2018

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Matters relating to qualification to meet the County's needs will receive highest priority in evaluation. Matters relating to the means of meeting those needs described in the proposal will be considered secondary. Actual prices may be used to select successful offerors, and pricing methods and flexibility offered by a proposer for use in negotiation of a resulting contract may be considered in evaluation. After a proposal is selected, the County expects to negotiate the details of work to be performed based upon the proposal and the County's needs and appropriate pricing of selected tasks. If negotiations fail for any reason, including price, the County may choose to negotiate with others to obtain an appropriate contract for needed services.

Firms will be evaluated on the following criteria:

1. The ability of the firm to service this account based on the contemplated scope of work and volume of business.
2. The experience of the firm, length of time in business and other matters relating to relevant experience.
3. Experience of the individuals assigned to this account.
4. Appropriateness and flexibility of pricing arrangements.
5. References either submitted with the proposal or known to the County.
6. The firm's approach to this work, including compliance with requirements, innovative offerings, services offered and other related matters.
7. Past performance with work provided to the County.
8. Other information as appropriate.

GENERAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS

The following terms and conditions apply to all proposals to provide services to Pierce County:

1. Pierce County expressly reserves the following rights:
 - a. To reject any and/or all irregularities in the proposals submitted.
 - b. To reject any or all proposals or portions thereof.
 - c. To base awards with due regard to quality of services, experience, compliance with specifications, and other such factors as may be necessary in the circumstances.
 - d. To make the award to any vendor or combination of vendors whose proposal(s), in the opinion of the County, is in the best interest of the County.
2. All proposals must be sealed in an envelope or appropriate packaging and addressed as requested in the RFP. The name and address of the vendor must appear on the envelope. The outside must state the RFP title and number and the RFP due date and time.
3. The RFP must be signed with ink by an authorized individual of the company empowered to act in that capacity before a contract will be negotiated.
4. Any proposal or modification received after the hour and date specified may be returned unopened.
5. All documents, reports, proposals, submittals, working papers, or other materials prepared by the Contractor pursuant to this proposal shall become the sole and exclusive property of the County, and the public domain, and not the property of the Contractor. The Contractor shall not copyright, or cause to be copyrighted, any portion of said items submitted to the County because of this solicitation.
6. All of the items mentioned above to be submitted to Pierce County should be printed both sides on recycled paper whenever practicable.

REQUIRED SIGNATURE PAGE FOR PROPOSAL

I, the undersigned, having carefully examined the Request for Proposals, propose to furnish services in accordance therewith as set forth in the attached proposal.

I further agree that this proposal will remain in effect for not less than sixty (60) calendar days from the date that proposals are due, and that this proposal may not be withdrawn or modified during that time.

Being first duly sworn, on my oath, I hereby certify that this proposal is genuine and not a sham or collusive proposal, or made in the interests or on behalf of any person not therein named; and I have not directly or indirectly induced or solicited any Contractor or supplier on the above work to put in a sham proposal or any person or corporation to refrain from submitting a proposal; and that I have not in any manner sought by collusion to secure to myself an advantage over any other contractor(s) or person(s).

In order to induce the County to consider this proposal, the proposer irrevocably waives any existing rights which it may have, by contract or otherwise, to require another person or corporation to refrain from submitting a proposal to or performing work or providing supplies to Pierce County, and proposer further promises that it will not in the future directly or indirectly induce or solicit any person or corporation to refrain from submitting a bid or proposal to or from performing work or providing supplies to Pierce County.

Signature

Printed Name

Firm

Address: _____

Phone Number _____

Email Address: _____

UBI No: _____

THIS PAGE MUST BE SIGNED AND RETURNED WITH THE PROPOSAL.