

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Broadband Infrastructure Study
Johnson County, Iowa

DATE: NOVEMBER 15, 2021



NOTICE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN proposals will be accepted for a detailed, technical, and actionable broadband study. **Emailed proposals must be received by the Johnson County Planning, Development and Sustainability (PDS) Department no later than 5 p.m. CT on FRIDAY, JANUARY 14, 2022.** Please email all proposals in a digital (PDF) format to Josh Busard, PDS Director, at jbusard@johnsoncountyiowa.gov. The email subject line must contain the phrase "Broadband Infrastructure Study" and should identify the firm making the proposal.

Johnson County ("County") reserves the right to reject any and all proposals, to waive technicalities or irregularities, abandon or change the RFP process, and to enter into such contract as it shall deem to be in the best interest of the County.

SECTION I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1. Introduction

For the purposes of this study, *broadband*, as defined by Johnson County, Iowa, shall be dedicated symmetrical service to all areas of Johnson County with speeds equal to or greater than 100 Mbps with a latency not to exceed 25 milliseconds and provided to the consumer at a cost not to exceed \$100 per month with a one-time installation service fee not to exceed \$200.

The County seeks to engage a qualified engineering and/or qualified consulting firm to develop a detailed, technical, and actionable broadband analysis for the entirety of the county with geographic emphasis on (1) the county's unincorporated areas, including identified rural economic development areas and villages, and (2) the smaller towns. The County does not currently own, and does not intend to own, broadband infrastructure.

The purpose of this study is to analyze county-wide broadband capabilities, needs, and deficiencies. The State of Iowa's existing Statewide Broadband Availability (Targeted Service Areas) Map is populated by service provider reported data and serves as a baseline for state and federal funding eligibility. This resource, however, does not reflect ongoing, proven occurrences of inaccurate speeds and service-area coverage. Johnson County requires localized, accurate, and actionable data beyond the Statewide Broadband Availability (Targeted Service Area) Map. Among other purposes, the County intends to use this study to pursue broadband funding opportunities at the state and federal level, including, but not limited to, American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds.

The analysis must include an assessment of the current state of broadband infrastructure and services, a detailed coverage assessment of the current broadband offerings, and detailed recommendations for broadband model options for consideration by Johnson County and its constituent investors.

The selected firm must provide three deliverables covering the following scopes:

- A. Documentation and Mapping of Existing Conditions
- B. Demand and Customer Satisfaction Study
- C. Gap Analysis and Proposed Recommendations for Mitigation

The expected components of these three deliverables are detailed below in Section II-1 of Scope of Work.

The selected firm shall have demonstrated previous experience in developing broadband analysis, feasibility studies, and plan implementation. The firm may use sub-consultants and/or submit a joint proposal with another firm(s); their credentials and experience must also be documented as part of submitted proposals.

2. Background

Located in eastern Iowa, Johnson County contains approximately 614 square miles, of which 564 square miles is unincorporated territory (i.e., land outside corporate city limits). Incorporated cities in the county (in order of population size) include Iowa City, Coralville, North Liberty, Tiffin, Solon, Lone Tree, University Heights, Swisher, Oxford, Hills, and Shueyville. A small portion of the City of West Branch also lies within Johnson County. Based on the recent U.S. Census 2020, Johnson County had a population (both incorporated and unincorporated areas) of 152,854 in 2020. Of the total population, 21,884 live in the unincorporated area. Johnson County is the fourth-largest county in Iowa by population and continues to be the second fastest-growing county in the state (16.8% population growth since 2010).

As noted above, it is in the unincorporated areas and smaller towns where there is significant interest by the County in evaluating the existing broadband infrastructure and formulating recommendations to enhance this service.

SECTION II. SPECIFIC TERMS AND CONDITIONS

1. Scope of Work

The area of coverage includes the entirety of Johnson County, including both the incorporated cities and the unincorporated areas. Particular emphasis should be placed on the county's unincorporated areas, including identified rural economic development areas and villages, and the smaller towns that are outside the metro area.

The proposed work shall include the following items:

- A. Documentation and Mapping of Existing Conditions, to include these components:
 - i. A detailed assessment of existing available products and services, pricing, providers, and any other information needed to create a detailed map.
 - ii. A detailed map, preferably at a census block level, showing existing coverage, quality of coverage, and pricing for as many customers as feasible. This assessment should be much more accurate and more detailed than what is already provided through state data.

- B. Demand and Customer Satisfaction Study, to include these components:
 - i. An assessment of our residents, businesses, anchor institutions, and others that measures their needs and whether they have the products and services to meet their needs.
 - ii. An adjacent customer satisfaction survey.

The proposed assessment and outreach method(s) used to obtain the above information should be described by the firm. It should include provision of at least one outreach method (e.g. survey) in multiple languages including English as well as some or all of these languages Spanish, Arabic, Mandarin Chinese, Korean, French and/or Swahili (exact languages to be determined).

- C. Gap Analysis and Proposed Recommendations for Mitigation
 - i. A gap analysis to better define and collect information on the served, unserved, and underserved areas throughout the defined area.
 - ii. An informed recommended action plan to address the deficiencies and achieve broadband coverage for all areas of Johnson County.
 - iii. Identification of risks to the county and mitigation plans (e.g., cost, regulatory, take-rate, and equipment failure).
 - iv. A high-level cost estimate of proposed solution(s) including suggested timelines.
 - v. A list of potential sources of funding currently available for broadband infrastructure buildout and a list of strategies for leveraging potential sources of funding with particular attention to ARPA.
 - vi. An examination of existing data and analysis currently available focused on reducing duplicate efforts. (We are aware that the State of Iowa is currently working to update their data regarding broadband availability including coverage maps.)

2. Desired Qualifications

- A. Knowledge of local government/public broadband development best practices, including regulatory, technical, financial, and economic considerations.
- B. Experience developing and maintaining inter-community and inter-county relationships (emphasis on experience working with rural communities).
- C. Experience conducting data gathering efforts to collect input and information from targeted parties, including proven methodologies and best practices.

- D. Knowledge of existing public funding models and resources available to public entities for broadband endeavors, including the American Rescue Plan Act Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (see Section V).

3. Project RFP Schedule

The following is the schedule for the proposal submission and selection process (*deadlines are end-of-day Central Time (CT) unless otherwise indicated*):

Date RFP issued	November 15, 2021
Deadline for firms to submit questions	December 1, 2021
Answers posted to questions	December 15, 2021
Proposals submittal deadline	5 p.m. CT January 14, 2022
Notification to firms no earlier than	February 15, 2022

SECTION III. SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS AND INFORMATION

1. Submission Due Date

Proposals will be accepted until **5 p.m. CT, January 14, 2022**. Submissions received after that time will not be considered.

2. Directions for Written Proposal Submission

Interested firms must email a digital copy (pdf format) of the proposal to Josh Busard, PDS Director, no later than the date and time noted above. **Submittals shall consist of the following items *provided in the following order***:

- A. A transmittal letter signed by the appropriate officer of the firm offering the proposal, certifying that the submittal and all information contained therein are accurate, and that the firm does not take exception to contract considerations listed in Section VI of this document.
- B. A concise and complete description of the work to be performed, specifically addressing the three deliverables and the Scope of Work, including:
 - i. An explanation of the firm's understanding of the project, its approach to the work, and the key issues to resolve. The County will also be interested in the following quality points:
 - a. How the firm can ensure accuracy of the map that will be created, including the methodologies that will be used.
 - b. How the firm will ensure a quality and equitable assessment of demand and customer satisfaction.
 - c. How the firm has the background to provide recommendations on pursuing ARPA and possibly other funding.
 - ii. A detailed work program and time schedule for the completion of all phases of the projects, including milestones for periodic review of the work.
 - iii. A communication plan to report the progress of the data collection and status of the overall project.

- C. A minimum of three (3) references from companies or agencies for which the firm provided similar services. Include all necessary contact information for the companies and the representatives who will be providing references. Also include the dates and location of services that were provided, and a brief description of the project(s). Please provide at least one example of past work (within the past two years) for this type of project. If the firm has not completed a particular project, please explain.
- D. Information on the company/services, including a detailed description of the company, its location, and the services performed. Also, include how long the company has been performing those services and the number of people the company employs.
- E. Identify who specifically from the firm and sub-contractors will be working on the project, which portions of the scope of work and deliverables, and describe their capacity.
- F. A fee schedule for the services requested. The proposed fee schedule should include line-by-line details of expenses. Quotation of fees and compensation shall remain firm for a period of at least ninety (90) days from the proposal submission deadline.
- G. The proposal should include proof that the firm has adequate liability insurance.

3. Additional Information

Women- and minority-owned firms are strongly encouraged to apply.

4. Questions

All questions should be submitted by email to Josh Busard, PDS Director, at jbusard@johnsoncountyiowa.gov no later than **December 1, 2021**.

Questions will be answered via email to those who ask a question. All answers will be posted by December 15, 2021, at these websites:

<https://johnsoncountyiowa.gov/broadband>

<https://www.johnsoncountyiowa.gov/bids-and-proposals>

SECTION IV. EVALUATION CRITERIA

The County's RFP evaluation team will consider the following items in their review:

- The qualifications of the firm and team members who will work on the project and any sub-consultants the firm intends to utilize, including the firm's and sub-consultants' knowledge and experience with regional broadband infrastructure deployment and experience in evaluating and understanding broadband technologies.
- The quality of similar projects that the consultant has completed. Previous experience conducting broadband analysis in the State of Iowa is desired.
- The proposed cost of the project and associated fee schedule.
- Location of the firm and any sub-contractors.

- The firm’s approach towards the completion of the scope of work and team capacity.
- The approach proposed for the public outreach and input solicitation process. The consultants’ ability to utilize technology and data throughout the planning process.
- Information provided by references.
- Examples of, or working website links, to other completed plans or similar work.
- Results of interview, if conducted. (The County reserves the right to conduct interviews with individual firms if additional information is required to further assess the proposals.) Proposals will be additionally evaluated on the basis of the responsiveness, quality and completeness of the submission.

SECTION V. AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT (ARPA)

This work will be subject to a service contract that stipulates compliance with provisions required by the [American Rescue Plan Act](#), including information outlined in the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) Compliance and Reporting Guidance: <https://www.regulations.gov/document/TREAS-DO-2021-0008-0002>.

SECTION VI. CONTRACT CONSIDERATIONS

1. General Considerations

The sections listed below are informational only; firms submitting proposals are hereby advised that any firm awarded a contract shall be subject to these conditions. Proposals packages are not required to contain any documents described within this section.

2. Indemnification

Any contracted executed by Johnson County is subject to the following:

“The awarded firm agrees to indemnify, defend, and save harmless, Johnson County, as well as its officers, agents and employees from any and all claims and losses to the extent caused by the negligent act, error or omission of the awarded firm resulting from the performance of this contract, except to the extent caused by the negligent acts of Johnson County or its officers, agents or employees.”

3. Invoicing and Payment

Invoices shall be paid promptly by Johnson County unless any items thereon are questioned, in which case payment will be withheld pending verification of amount claimed and the validity of the claim. Standard payment terms are Net 30 Days from receipt of properly executed invoice(s).

4. Termination

Subject to the provisions below, the contract may be terminated by either party, upon thirty (30) days' advance notice to the other party.

5. Award Considerations

Johnson County may reject any or all proposals or submittals for such reason as it may deem proper. In acceptance of proposals or submittals, Johnson County will be guided by consideration of the interests of Johnson County. Johnson County also reserves the right to negotiate further with one or more of the firms as to any features of their proposals or submittals and to accept modifications of the work and price when such action will be in the best interests of Johnson County.

The individual signing this submittal hereby declares that no person or persons other than members of his/her own organization are interested in this project or in the contract proposed to be taken; that it is made without any connection with any other person or persons making a proposal for the same work and is in all respects fair and without collusion or fraud; that no person acting for or employed by Johnson County is directly or indirectly interested therein, or in the supplies or works to which it relates or will receive any part of the profit or any commission therefrom in any manner which is unethical or contrary to the best interests of Johnson County.

6. Use of Documents

As part of any resultant agreement, the selected firm shall grant to Johnson County a nonexclusive license to reproduce the Instruments of Service (e.g., reports and renderings), provided that Johnson County shall comply with all obligations, including prompt payment of all sums when due, under the agreement. The selected firm shall further grant a nonexclusive license permitting Johnson County to authorize other similarly credentialed design professionals to reproduce and, where permitted by law, to make changes, corrections or additions to the Instruments of Service for the purposes of implementing improvements to the project sites. The selected firm shall obtain similar nonexclusive licenses from its consultants consistent with the agreement.