

Connecting NH – Answers to Submitted Questions

Round 2

Q. Why does the anticipated Grant agreement term run through December 30, 2021, according to RFP section 1.8, but all expenditures under the Agreement must end by December 30, 2020 (page 7)?

A. See Addendum #2 to the RFP.

Q. What are potential bidders using as the reference for knowing what unserved addresses there are in the State? Is there a map, spreadsheet, or listing somewhere?

A. Applicants are responsible for identification of Unserved Properties, which will be subject to verification. Section 4.7 requires a statement confirming that the Project will provide service to Unserved Properties and supporting documentation.

Q. Can individual towns propose their own use of the funds? In discussions with vendors, a significant portion of the cost is the infrastructure of a communications shelter, generator power, and AC. Could a town propose to acquire equipment that sets it up for Broadband initiatives?

A. Project funding beyond the CARES Act funds can come from any outside source, including town and provider funds, thereby reducing the State Public Cost per property using CARES Act funds. CARES Act Funds can only be used for projects that make 25/3 Mbps broadband connectivity available to Unserved Properties by December 15, 2020.

Q. A town has sections that have zero internet. Would these sections qualify for these funds?

A. Yes, any Unserved Properties with no, or less than 25/3 Mbps, broadband connectivity would be eligible.

Q. Who applies for the funds... county or towns?

A. Either may apply. See Addendum #2 to the RFP.

Q. Is there any funding for more rural areas or is there scoring targeted for rural areas?

A. Any Unserved Properties with no, or less than 25/3 Mbps, broadband connectivity would be eligible.

Q. Would it be acceptable if our community collaborated with other towns on a project?

A. Yes.

Q. Are you encouraging municipalities to take advantage of the provisions in SB170?

A. Project funding beyond the CARES Act funds can come from any outside source, including town and provider funds, thereby reducing the State Public Cost per property using CARES Act funds.

Q. Would it benefit the town in your scoring to have a comprehensive communications zoning ordinance?

A. No.

Q. Our town put out an RFP seeking broadband coverage of our unserved areas. Is it possible for a proposal to also be funded through our RFP for those areas?

A. Yes, so long as the Project meets the requirements of this RFP and no portion of the proposed Project has already commenced construction or build out and no portion of the proposed project is related to existing rural broadband expansion commitments or other existing contractual commitments.

Q. Sec 1.1: Please define unserved versus underserved.

A. Unserved Properties are defined in Section 3 of the RFP. Underserved is not a term used in the RFP.

Q. Sec. 1.5: Please clarify – proposal valid for 90 or 180 days.

A. See Addendum #1 to the RFP.

Q. Sec 3.1.6: What about towns that do not issue occupancy permits?

A. Applicants proposing service in towns that do not issue occupancy permits must confirm in the proposal that properties identified as Unserved Properties that do not have a certificate of occupancy meet the legal requirements for occupancy, subject to verification.

Q. Sec 5.1.2: Evaluation criteria based on connection speed. Is the minimum, average, or maximum to be available?

A. The 25/3 Mbps is a minimum eligible connection speed.

Q. Page 7: "The program requires reliable service delivered at a minimum of 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload," to be delivered by Dec. 15, 2020? How will this be measured? What if it only measures 20/1.5?

A. Written certification that the project is configured to provide a minimum of 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload will be required before acceptance of the Project by the State. The certification will be subject to audit.

Q. How will service speeds be verified post-construction to guarantee that the state funds have been spent appropriately?

A. Written certification that the network is configured to provide a minimum of 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload will be required before acceptance of the Project by the State. The certification will be subject to audit.

Q. What is the definition of a municipality? Is a County considered a municipality?

A. See Addendum #2 to the RFP.

Q. Does the project absolutely need to be completed by Dec, 15, 2020 or can it be partial? And why does it need to be completed by Dec 15, 2020?

A. Pursuant to Section 2 of the RFP, to be eligible for funding, "Projects must be completed as soon as possible, but no later than December 15, 2020." Section 2 provides further, "To meaningfully affect (sic) the State of New Hampshire's response to COVID-19 and to comply with CARES Act requirements, all expenditures under this program will end by December 30, 2020. The pro rata portion, as determined by the State, of any Projects not completed by December 15, 2020 will not be eligible for funding and must be completed at the Applicant's sole expense."

Q. If project is to be completed by Dec 15, 2020 and 90% of project funds are payable at end of the project, is the RFP not biased towards incumbents or wireless providers? Does this 10%/90% funding formula border on discrimination?

A. This Grant seeks to fund reliable broadband connectivity to as many Unserved Properties in the State as possible. Applicants may secure outside funding to facilitate the project.

Q. Given that pole applications, attachments and licenses can take up to 6 months, how does the state of NH expect the project to be complete by Dec 15, 2020 when construction itself can be another 3-6 months (for wireline builds)?

A. Pursuant to Section 4., paragraph 9, if a pole attachment agreement is necessary for the Project, the Applicant is required to provide written assurance that a valid pole attachment agreement is in place.

Q. Is there any weighting provided to service speeds?

A. Yes, see Section 5.2 of the RFP.

Q. Footnote 3 on page 10 states: "By submitting an Application and signing the cover letter, any Applicant that is also an owner of poles necessary for another Application under this Grant

agrees to enter into a reasonable and timely voluntary pole attachment agreement(s) related to the Application." How is reasonableness and timeliness enforced and what are its definitions?

A. The goal of the Grant is to fund broadband connectivity to as many Unserved Properties as possible by December 15, 2020. Reasonableness and timeliness will be evaluated on the basis of meeting that objective.

Q. How might a proposal from a private/public partnership be received?

A. Any municipality, county, or qualified provider, or combination of the two, meeting the RFP requirements, are eligible to apply.

Q. If no application qualifies or is deemed acceptable, what will happen to the funds?

A. OSI reserves the right to offer additional RFPs for remaining funds after this RFP. Uncommitted funds will revert back to the CARES Act fund for reallocation to other projects by the Governor.

Q. Who wrote this RFP?

A. This RFP was jointly developed by the Office of Strategic Initiatives, the Public Utilities Commission, and the Department of Education.

Q. Does government take the lack of broadband in rural NH seriously?

A. Yes.

Q. What is meant by "technology neutral" on page 7? Does this exclude existing partnerships?

A. Technology neutral means that no broadband technology meeting the requirements of the RFP will be given preference. Existing partnerships are not excluded, provided that

construction has not commenced and no portion of the proposed project is related to existing rural broadband expansion commitments or other existing contractual commitments.

Q. Pg. 4, 1.7 (sic): Notwithstanding NH RSA 91-A:4, no information shall be available to the public, or to the members of the general court or its staff concerning specific responses to this RFP invitation from the time this RFP is published until the closing date for responses. You mean a town can't share with the public or their legislator that they are planning to submit an application?

A. It is assumed that the question intended to refer to Sec. 1.8. See Addendum #2 to the RFP.

Q. If a town has broadband speeds available only in some areas but the rest of the town does not, and if we need to pass through a served area in order to service an unserved area of the town, do we count the number of houses for the whole town?

A. Only the Unserved Properties will be eligible for consideration.

Q. If the resources available identify an area as unserved but later in project that it is discovered the information was incorrect. how would that effect the proposal or the contract?

A. Compliance with the RFP requirements, including the Unserved Property requirement, will be a term of the Grant Agreement.