**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

**Lincoln County North/West Region Broadband Planning**

**INTRODUCTION**

Lincoln County and the Lincoln County Regional Planning Commission (hereinafter, “LCRPC”) are requesting proposals to facilitate broadband planning for seven towns in Lincoln County.

**BACKGROUND**

The LCRPC is a county-wide organization providing economic and community development, land use, transportation, and natural resource planning services to our communities and the County, and operates as a department within Lincoln County. The LCRPC has been meeting with community and county officials to expand broadband capacity within the County.

The LCRPC‘s intent is to create a Community Technology Plan by laying out a multi-year, multi-tier approach that can be staged over time and built as funds are available. The plan will specifically address the goals that are developed during the planning process. Communities need more robust internet and telecommunications services for families and businesses, and the planning process should identify a variety of options for rural broadband development across the several different towns.

## Broadband planning is an important part of the County’s future economic growth. Within this process, each town is given its own stand-alone plan; all existing assets are leveraged to save cost; and all technologies (DSL, Wireless and Fiber) are considered.

**LOCATION**

The North/West region includes the towns of Somerville, Jefferson, Whitefield, Dresden, Wiscasset, Westport Island, and Edgecomb.

**FUNDING**

ConnectME awarded Lincoln County a two-phase Community Planning Grant. We have been authorized to spend $6825 on Phase I, and up to $31,850 in Phase II, contingent ConnectME’s acceptance of the Phase I final report and demonstration of readiness for Phase II.

**OBJECTIVES**

Broadband access and adoption has been identified by the County, the LCRPC and these communities as a critical strategy for improving the overall quality of life in rural communities by:

* Creating more opportunities for people to work where they live
* Providing young people with expanded educational and employment opportunities
* Improving access to adult education, healthcare and telehealth
* Supporting improved municipal and emergency services
* Increasing the quality of tourism experiences and related business benefits
* Attracting young families to live and work in the area.

This broadband planning project will identify broadband strategies and options that will allow the residents of these 7 Lincoln County towns to effectively meet their community, business and technology objectives.

**PROPOSAL SUBMISSION AND DUE DATE**

All proposals must be clearly marked “Broadband Planning” and mailed or delivered to the LCRPC at 297 Bath Road, Wiscasset, ME 04578 by 4 pm on Friday, September 14, 2018. Proposals may be emailed to mbarnes@lcrpc.org.

The following is a schedule of events concerning the bid process:

Distribution of the RFP: 08/24/2018

Questions due: 08/31/2018

Questions answered: 09/07/2018

Due date: 09/14/2018

Tentative Decision: 10/02/2018

Commence Work: 10/03/2018

**SCOPE OF WORK**

Phase I: Identify Current Landscape and Needs

Major activities will be:

* Outreach (Broadband Committee, town officials, public education, etc.)
* Surveys (with the LCRPC, prepare resident and business survey, determine best ways to distribute in each town, distribute, analyze results, etc.)
* Municipal procedures, policies and ordinances (rights-of-way; towers; franchise agreements)
* Inventory existing assets (infrastructure plus all internet service providers)
* Digital Inclusion plan (how to provide affordable broadband and computers: assess need for and availability of broadband and technology, develop digital literacy classes, and establish public computer access where needed, etc.)

Phase II: Network Designs - Gap Analysis

The funds have been put in escrow by ConnectME, contingent upon satisfactorily completing Phase I. More details will be developed as Phase I nears completion.

* + Outreach
	+ Network Design: engineering designs to address gap analysis based on Phase I
	+ Financial modeling of solutions: engineering plan, cost analysis
	+ Preliminary and final report preparation and presentation

**DESIRED QUALIFICATIONS**

Qualified candidates must demonstrate knowledge of community and regional broadband planning and broadband infrastructure and service in all aspects – technical, regulatory and economic. Knowledge of digital inclusion and adoption is required. Expertise and specific experience in the implementation of digital inclusion and adoption programs and broadband infrastructure is highly desired.

The following background is all highly desirable:

* Prior experience with mapping and inventorying broadband assets and capabilities, including existing broadband infrastructure;
* Prior experience preparing a needs assessment and gap analysis;
* Prior experience informing the public of progress in implementing a project and involving the public in a project through surveys, forums and meetings;
* Prior experience creating a network plan and financial analysis aimed at improving and expanding broadband coverage while leveraging current assets;
* Substantive knowledge of opportunities for financing through local, state and federal programs and incentives;
* Substantive knowledge of digital inclusion and adoption programs;
* Prior experience and success in identifying, preparing, submitting and securing grants for broadband construction and digital literacy and adoption programs/projects;
* Prior experience completing similar project development; and,
* Ability to perform and deliver project deliverables in a timely manner.

Respondents may elect to assemble a team to address all requirements of this RFP if they do not exist at a single organization. In such case the collective team must demonstrate the knowledge and experience described above.

**SUBMISSION OF RESPONSES**

To ensure that your response to this RFP is given appropriate consideration, please submit your response no later than 4:00 p.m. EDT on September 14, 2018. Lincoln County and the LCRPC assume no responsibility or liability for late delivery or receipt of responses. The County and the LCRPC are under no obligation to consider any responses received after the deadline.

Notification of selection or non-selection of all Respondents who submitted conforming responses will be made when the selection process is final. It is anticipated that the selection will be made by October 2.

If it becomes necessary to revise any part of this RFP, addenda will be supplied to all Respondents who have notified the County and the LCRPC that they wish to receive all addenda.

There is no expressed or implied obligation of the County and the LCRPC to reimburse Respondents for any expenses incurred in preparing responses to this request.

Response format and delivery: All responses must be submitted electronically in Adobe PDF format. Please email your response to Mary Ellen Barnes at mbarnes@lcrpc.org. *All responses must be formatted to print on 8.5x11” paper.* In the subject line of the email please indicate the name of your organization and reference the Lincoln County North/West RFP.

**INFORMATION REQUESTED**

This RFP is intended to enable firms and organizations to demonstrate their qualifications to provide the requested services, and to enable the County and the LCRPC to evaluate those qualifications. Responses should include specific information that will demonstrate the qualifications and experience required by this RFP.

1. Cover Page: Please include the name of the organization or firm responding to this RFP and the contact person for the Respondent, including their title, address, phone and email.
2. Executive Summary: Respondents should provide a summary of their organization and their proposed approach for working with the County and the LCRPC. This summary should be a maximum of 2 pages.
3. Statement of Qualifications: All responses must include a statement of qualifications, experience and description of the Respondent firm or organization and its history. The response should specifically indicate the firm or organization’s current and historical expertise in providing the consulting services identified in this RFP. The response should also specifically indicate the strength of the firm’s financial resources to provide these services.
4. Staff/Team Qualifications: All responses must include resumes of each individual who will be providing consulting services on this project, as well as written descriptions of the individuals’ experience relevant to broadband infrastructure planning and assessment, and digital inclusion and adoption. All Respondents must identify the individual(s) who will have primary responsibility for contact and communications with the County and the LCRPC, and the person who is authorized to negotiate and contractually bind the Respondent.
5. Project Understanding and Approach: Respondents should provide a description of the tasks involved in developing this project, including a description of your firm/organization’s suggested role in implementing these tasks and your approach to collaborating with others. Please describe these tasks under two categories, as follows: 1) Tasks needed to conduct the Phase I activities; 2) Following Phase I, tasks needed to carry out Phase II activities. The contractor selected with the help of this RFP must be capable of taking the project through completion of both phases of this ConnectME project. Your response to this section of the Project Understanding and Approach should be no more than 3 pages.
6. Provide a projected timeline.
7. Submit a budget aligned to significant project milestones, costs, and tasks.
8. References: All responses must include references from at least 3 clients of the firm or organization, preferably clients who have utilized the firm on matters related to the consulting services sought herein. Please describe what the client’s project was that you worked on and what you did for the client. The references must include a contact person—most preferably the client you worked directly with on the project—a full address, email, and phone number. If personnel who will be assigned to work under this RFP previously participated in any of the projects conducted for clients on the foregoing list, please identify the projects in which the individuals participated.
9. Equal Opportunity Employer: You must state whether you are an Equal Opportunity Employer.

**EVALUATION**

Responses will be reviewed and evaluated by staff of the County and the LCRPC.

The following criteria will be used to evaluate responses:

1. Demonstrated knowledge of the tasks identified in the Scope of Services of this RFP.
2. Qualifications and experience of the primary personnel identified to provide the services.
3. Record and experience in providing similar services to other clients.
4. Demonstrated capacity and team structure to perform the type of services sought in this RFP.
5. Project understanding and approach.

Lincoln County and LCRPC reserve the right to:

1. Accept or reject any and all Statements of Qualifications received in response to the RFP and to re-advertise for new submittals.
2. Request the submission of Statements modifications at any time before the selection is made, if the County and the LCRPC believe it is in their best interest.
3. Consider Statements or modifications received at any time before the selection is made, if the County and the LCRPC believe it is in their best interest.
4. Investigate the qualifications and experience of the Respondent, including but not limited to interviewing the Respondent and such people as the County and the LCRPC deem appropriate, including people other than those provided as references.
5. Request clarification and/or additional information from the Respondent during the evaluation process.
6. Utilize ideas submitted in the Statements received, regardless of whether the Respondent is selected.
7. Negotiate with the selected Respondent(s) to include further services not identified in this RFP.
8. This RFP does not commit the County and the LCRPC to select any Respondent, award any work, pay any costs incurred in preparing a response, or procure or contract for any services or supplies.
9. The County and the LCRPC reserve the right to accept or reject any or all submittals received, cancel or modify the RFP in part or in its entirety, or change the RFP guidelines, when the County and LCRPC believe it is in their best interest to do so.

After the evaluation of the proposals and selection of the successful contractor, all bidders will be notified in writing of the selected firm.

The County and the LCRPC will make the final decision based on the ability to meet objectives listed in the Scope of Work.

**METHOD OF AWARD**

The LCRPC and the County reserve the right to award this contract not necessarily to the contractor with the lowest price, but to the bidder that demonstrates the best ability to fulfill the requirements of the RFP.

Contractors whose proposals do not meet the mandatory requirements will be considered non-compliant. After the evaluation of the proposals and selection of the successful contractor, all contractors will be notified in writing of the selected firm.

**ACCEPTANCE/REJECTION**

LCRPC and the County reserve the right to waive any informality in proposals, to accept any proposal and to reject any or all proposals, should it be deemed in the best interest to do so.

**DISCLAIMER**

LCRPC and the County will not be responsible for any costs incurred by the respondent in the preparation of a response to this Request for Proposals. LCRPC and the County furthermore reserve the right to select the consultant or consultants deemed most advantageous and, thus, reserve the right to award all or part of the study identified in this Request for Proposals and will not be held responsible if, in its opinion, the best interests of the project will be served by not awarding all or parts of the study as defined in this Request for Proposals.

Date: August 24, 2018

Mary Ellen Barnes LCRPC Executive Director

Carrie Kipfer, Lincoln County Administrator