
**SOMERSET COUNTY, MD
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
BROADBAND FEASIBILITY STUDY**

The Somerset County (MD) Commissioners are seeking proposals from qualified firms in accordance with this Request for Proposal (RFP) as set forth herein, to prepare a feasibility study to conduct a broadband feasibility study as a key input in the development of a comprehensive community broadband strategy.

Sealed bids from qualified firms will be accepted by the Somerset County Commissioners, 11916 Somerset Avenue, Room 111, Princess Anne, MD 21853, until 1 p.m. on Tuesday, March 5, 2019. Proposals received later than the aforementioned date and time will be returned to sender unopened. Neither facsimile (FAX) copies nor electronic copies of proposals will be accepted.

Request For Proposal documents may be obtained in person or by mail, from the Department of Technical & Community Services, 11916 Somerset Avenue, Room 211, Princess Anne, MD 21853, or by calling (410) 651-1424. The documents are also available at the County's Website at www.somersetmd.us on the "Bids/Proposals" page.

Funding for this activity is made available by the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) through federally-funded Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program administered in Maryland by the State's Department of Housing & Community Development (DHCD) as part of the Hurricane Sandy Disaster Recovery efforts. Somerset County is an equal opportunity employer, and strongly encourages submissions by minority and women business enterprises and Section 3 businesses.

For more information, please contact Gary Pusey at the Somerset County Department of Technical & Community Services at 410-651-1424 or at gpusey@somersetmd.us.



Somerset County Department of Technical & Community Services

11916 Somerset Ave., Room 211
Princess Anne, MD 21853
Phone: 410-651-1424

Request for Proposal

Broadband Feasibility Study

All **questions** concerning this RFP must be submitted in writing (email is acceptable) by 4:00 PM EST of February 8, 2019 and addressed to:

Somerset County Department of Technical & Community Services
Gary R. Pusey, Planning Director
11916 Somerset Ave., Room 211
Princess Anne, MD 21853
gpusey@somersetmd.us

Proposals must be submitted by **March 5, 2019, @ 1 p.m. EST** and addressed to:

Board of Somerset County Commissioners
11916 Somerset Ave., Room 111
Princess Anne, MD 21853

The proposals will be opened and read aloud at a public meeting of the County Commissioners on March 5, 2019, @ 2 p.m. at 11916 Somerset Avenue, Room 111, Princess Anne, MD.

**Somerset County Department of Technical & Community Services
Request for Proposal for Broadband Feasibility Study**

DATE OF THIS REQUEST: January 16, 2019

DESCRIPTION: Broadband Feasibility Study

PROPOSAL DEADLINE: March 5, 2019 @ 1:00 p.m. EST

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS:

Three (3) copies of the proposal, including one original (clearly marked "ORIGINAL"), and one copy in WORD software on CD/Flash Drive, shall be submitted in a sealed container. The face of the container shall be clearly marked in the lower left corner as follows:

RFP FOR: Broadband Feasibility Study

Proposals must be submitted by March 5, 2019 @ 1 p.m. EST to:

Board of Somerset County Commissioners
11916 Somerset Ave., Room 111
Princess Anne, MD 21853

PROPOSALS OPENED: March 5, 2019, @ 2 p.m. EST

Proposals must be received by the date and time stated above or they will remain unopened and returned. No allowance will be made for postmark or error in delivery to incorrect address. It is the sole responsibility of the bidder to ensure timely and correct delivery of bid to the person and address stated above. Overnight delivery services may not guarantee timely next day delivery. Please check with the service you use. Electronic submittals, such as by email, will not be accepted.

Please direct all requests for information relating to this RFP in writing (Email Acceptable) to:

Somerset County Department of Technical & Community Services
Gary R. Pusey, Planning Director
11916 Somerset Ave., Room 211
Princess Anne, MD 21853
gpusey@somersetmd.us

RFP Documentation and any Questions Submitted can also be viewed at

<http://www.somersetmd.us/bids.html>

Proposals shall be prepared at the bidder's expense and becomes a County record and therefore a public record.

Proposal should include and will be evaluated based on:

1. Cover Sheet (Provided)
2. General Vendor Information Sheet (Provided)
3. Customer Reference Form (Provided)
4. Demonstration of understanding of scope of work
5. Proposed approach to performing the work defined by the deliverable section
6. Outline of staff expertise, technical and financial capabilities
7. Assurance of staff depth to meet project timeline
8. Experience related to the project
9. Fee Schedule and Cost Proposal to complete deliverables
10. Proof of insurance as described in Vendor Qualifications

Milestone	Date
Release RFP to Vendors	Jan. 16, 2019
Vendor Questions (if any)	No later than Feb. 8, 2019
Answers to RFP Questions	No later than Feb. 15, 2019
Proposal Responses Due	Mar. 5, 2019
Proposal Responses Opened	Mar. 5, 2019
Vendor Selection (target)	Mar. 19, 2019
Contract Negotiations Complete	Apr. 2, 2019
Contract Signed	Apr. 2, 2019
Work Begins	Apr. 3, 2019

<i>Evaluation Criteria</i>	
Company Background, References & Quality of Proposal	30%
Industry Experience	15%
Pricing	30%
Company Resources & Project Team	25%

Overview and RFP Purpose

The Somerset County Department of Technical & Community Services (DTCS) seeks qualified vendors to conduct a broadband feasibility study as a key input in the development of a comprehensive community broadband strategy. The County reserves the option to include additional related services in the resulting vendor contract after reviewing vendor proposals. A more detailed description of the desired deliverables is provided in the following sections of this document. The County will consider proposals from single vendors or from multiple vendors working as a team, though a prime contractor must be identified in the case of the latter. The ideal vendor will have excellent technical and analytic depth in areas of interest to the County under this RFP, and must be highly-effective communicators, particularly in translating technical concepts to non-technical audiences. The County prefers firms with experience working with public sector organizations, having worked with governmental entities both larger and smaller than Somerset County. The County is employing this procurement method to both explore the costs and logistics of procuring the described services, while also evaluating alternative mixes of additional service offerings from a diverse vendor community. As such, the County reserves the right to reject any and all proposals or any part thereof, to waive any formalities or informalities, to award the contract to the most responsive and responsible respondent(s) as deemed in the best interest of the County, or to suspend the procurement if the desired outcomes are not achieved.

Funding for this activity is made available through the federally-funded Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG). Somerset County is an equal opportunity employer, and strongly encourages submissions by minority and women business enterprises and Section 3 businesses.

Background, Project Justification and Key Drivers

General County Information

Somerset County, the southernmost County on Maryland's Eastern Shore, is the second least populated of Maryland's counties. It is bounded by the Chesapeake Bay to the west and Virginia's Eastern Shore to the south. It is located approximately 100 miles from the Baltimore/Washington, Wilmington/ Philadelphia, and Norfolk/Hampton Roads metro areas. Crisfield and Princess Anne are the major business and industrial centers. Somerset's 415 businesses employ 3,730 workers; major employers include Sysco Eastern Maryland, Handy International, Mountaire Farms, PNC, Rubberset, Eastern Correctional Institute and the University of Maryland Eastern Shore.

Much of Somerset County is underserved in terms of access to broadband. There is minimal competition for high speed Internet access other than the incumbent telephone provider offering DSL services, a cable provider that provides cable internet in a limited service area and a fixed wireless LTE provider with limited reach.

The County hosts the University of Maryland Eastern Shore campus in Princess Anne. Wor-Wic Community College, a two year occupation oriented "college without walls" also holds classes throughout the Lower Eastern Shore. Without broadband service to residents, meaningful distance learning is not an option for those seeking higher education opportunities – resulting in many young people leaving the county. Reliable broadband service is also critical to the success of public and private school students who are desire to continue their educational pursuits.

While protecting the best interest of the County and its Citizens, the goal of the County is to research the best options available that advance a viable means to bring the best possible broadband services to a county that has limited resources and sparse population.

The final goal would be to have a world-class broadband infrastructure for Somerset County for the 21st century and beyond. We acknowledge broadband is a critical service for quality of life, as is the case with roads, water, sewer, and electricity. Every home, business, non-profit organization, government entity, and place of education should have the opportunity to connect affordably, easily, and securely. Somerset County should have broadband services that are shaped by the values of the citizens and businesses that take deep pride in our community.

Assistance to be provided by the County

The County will provide, where applicable, the following information:

1. The location of communications towers in the County of which the County is aware of at the time of issuance of this RFP.
2. Access to the Somerset County GIS Files including maps showing locations of known businesses and governmental facilities.
3. Such reasonable additional information as may be necessary to provide specific services and meaningful response to this RFP.

Project Specifications and Deliverables

Proposals should be prepared simply and economically, providing a straightforward, concise description of capabilities to satisfy the requirements of the RFP. Emphasis should be placed on completeness and clarity of content.

Scope of Work

1. Research and evaluate the current supply of broadband communications assets, products and services in the County through a range of efforts and methodologies identified by the successful firm. Develop a communications and outreach strategy to engage stakeholders, disseminate information and provide opportunities for inclusion in the process.

2. Utilizing Surveys and other methods, evaluate the current and future demand for broadband products and services in the County through a range of efforts and methodologies, including but not limited to conversations with:
 - a) Public stakeholders (e.g. local and regional government agencies, educational institutions, federal laboratories and agencies, etc.).
 - b) Private stakeholders (e.g. local businesses, business organizations, health care providers, digital divide advocates, other interested consumers and interest groups).
 - c) Broadband providers regarding the demand for, and adoption of, their products.
3. Provide strategic guidance in the planning of a broadband connectivity project that can be implemented as cost-effectively and quickly as possible for the purpose of enabling economic development and citizen connectivity.
4. Conduct a technical, organizational feasibility assessment, develop a preliminary plan with suggested routes and make recommendations on how to proceed which may include current availability, penetration and usage of broadband services, service territories, backhaul routes, capacity, providers and other relevant information for the project.
5. Assessment of potential construction and operational relationships with public, private, and membership-owned companies in the project service area, and with other publicly or privately funded networks as suitable for interconnection.
6. Provide an assessment of the telecommunications environment detailing the location of facilities, types of services, pricing, availability and limitations. Identify potential areas for partnership between the County and incumbent providers and if possible provide assistance to the County in creating dialogue with these providers.
7. Identification of potential wired network routes and interconnection points as well as potential tower site recommendations to support and maximize consumer coverage.
8. Consider opportunities to pursue a regional approach; leveraging telecommunications assets in support of regional cooperation.
9. Perform a Gap Analysis of the Current Broadband Environment - evaluate the current environment against the current and future needs of Somerset County, including all stakeholders defined in the project. Determine what economic and community impact broadband issues are having on Somerset County. The Gap Analysis should include an evaluation of key issues limiting broadband expansion.
10. Identify funding sources and provide strong justification for funding to serve as the basis for a grant/loan application to support project implementation.

Deliverables

Using the results of the entire Scope of Work analysis, develop a comprehensive written report that presents alternatives to address the engineering and business parameters for deploying broadband services throughout Somerset County. The analysis must consider a wide continuum

of business models and engineering options. It shall also highlight associated costs, alternative financing methods including other funding sources, as well as risk, timing and service quality considerations. The report must conclude the analysis by identifying a recommended strategy and associated action plan for its implementation.

Deliverables to include:

1. County demographics
2. Survey results
3. Incumbent providers, their location(s) and details on current services and technologies
4. Industry findings
5. Similar projects
6. Potential project partners
7. Synergies and sharing opportunities
8. Legal and regulatory issues
9. Preliminary design modeling to achieve connectivity and redundancy affordability
10. Business and financial modeling in support of network build to include Fiber-to-the-Home (FTTH), Fixed Wireless Broadband or a Hybrid System
11. Estimation of project cost and construction timeline
12. Provide any GIS-based shapefiles created or utilized for the Project
13. Report that clearly defines their stakeholder evaluation process including their recommended participant level in order to reach statistically reliable results.
14. Final list of recommendations and suggested implementation measures to be employed by Somerset County for its "Next Step" Phase.

Vendor Qualifications

1. The County may make such investigations as deemed necessary to determine the ability of the vendor or subcontractors or suppliers to perform the work, and the vendor shall furnish to the County all such information and data for this purpose as the County may request.
2. The County reserves the right to reject any proposal if the evidence submitted by or investigation of such vendor fails to satisfy the County that such vendor is properly qualified to carry out the obligations of the contract and/or to complete the work contemplated therein within the time required.

3. The vendor is specifically advised that any person, firm or other party to whom it proposes to award a subcontract or purchase order under this contract must be identified and found to be acceptable to the County.
4. The vendor must have the authority to do business in the State of Maryland.
5. The offeror shall be required to provide evidence that it has, and will maintain during performance of services under this contract, professional liability insurance and general liability insurance as applicable, and will be required to submit a Certificate of Insurance indicating the limits of such insurance that are satisfactory to the County.
6. The vendor accepts the terms that anything provided to the County as a deliverable then becomes the sole property of Somerset County and cannot be redistributed in any form without the express written consent of the Somerset County Commissioners or its designees.

Vendor Qualifications

The County reserves the right to accept or reject all proposals or sections thereof when the rejection is in the best interest of the County. The County reserves the right to award without further discussion. Therefore, responses should be submitted initially with the most favorable terms the vendor proposes. The County reserves the right to reject the proposal of a vendor who has previously failed to perform properly or completed on time contracts and to reject the proposal of any vendor who in the opinion of the County, is not in a position to adequately perform the contract. The County reserves the right to reject any and all proposals, any part or parts of a proposal, and waive any requirements in the RFP for good cause.

Proposal Cover Sheet

Name of Company	
Address of Home Office	
City of Home Office	
State of Home Office	
Zip Code of Home Office	
Phone Number of Home Office	
Federal EIN	
State EIN	

Contact Name:

Contact Office Phone Number:

Contact Cell Phone Number:

Contact E-Mail Address:

“Proposal and cost schedule shall be valid and binding for ONE HUNDRED TWENTY (120) days following the proposal due date and will become part of the contract that is negotiated with the COUNTY.”

General Vendor Information Sheet

Name of parent company	
Length of time in business	
Length of time in business of providing proposed service	
Gross revenue for the prior fiscal year	
Percentage of gross revenue generated by proposed services	
Total number of clients	
Total number of clients in the proposed service area	
Number of public sector clients	
Number of full-time personnel in:	
Consulting	
Sales, marketing, and administrative support	
Internet fiber-optic technical staff	
Other (please note relevant staff)	
Where is your headquarters located?	
Field offices?	
Which office would service this account?	
Other significant statistics related to creating feasibility projects during the past year	

If the vendor has had any contract terminated for default during the past five years, all such incidents must be described. Termination for default is defined as notice to stop performance due to the vendor's nonperformance or poor performance; and the issue was either (a) not litigated or (b) litigated, and such litigation determined the vendor to be in default. In the space provided below, submit full details of all terminations for default experienced by the vendor during the past **five years**, including the other party's name, address, and telephone number. Present the vendor's position on the matter. The County will evaluate the facts and may, at its sole discretion, reject the vendor's proposal if the facts discovered indicate that completion of a contract resulting from this RFP may be jeopardized by selection of the vendor. If no such terminations for default have been experienced by the vendor in the past five years, declare so in the space provided.

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Customer Reference Form (Include information for three references)

Customer – client name	
Reference name	
Title	
Office Phone Number	
Cell Phone Number	
E-Mail Address	
Mailing Address	
Start Date	
End Date	
Contract amount	

Customer – client name	
Reference name	
Title	
Office Phone Number	
Cell Phone Number	
E-Mail Address	
Mailing Address	
Start Date	
End Date	
Contract amount	

Customer – client name	
Reference name	
Title	
Office Phone Number	
Cell Phone Number	
E-Mail Address	
Mailing Address	
Start Date	
End Date	
Contract amount	