

# **REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

## **Consulting**

### **REGION A WIRELESS PROPAGATION STUDY**

**Proposals due May 31, 2019**

**Requested By:**



**Southwestern Commission  
125 Bonnie Lane  
Sylva, NC 28779**

**Posted May 6, 2019**

## **A. Overview**

The Southwestern Commission (SWC) seeks the professional services of a qualified consultant to conduct a Wireless Propagation Study for the seven western counties of North Carolina (hereinafter “Project”). The Project is funded by a grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission and will be administered by the SWC. The SWC is the council of government for North Carolina’s Region A, which includes the 7 westernmost counties in the state and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. The SWC provides technical assistance to the local governments in our region and facilitates partnerships to reach regional goals. The Mountain West Partnership, a collaboration of economic development partners for the 7 western counties in North Carolina, is a partner in this project.

The Project covers Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Jackson, Macon, and Swain Counties and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. The purpose of this project is to identify existing broadband infrastructure assets throughout the region that could be used to locate transmitters that would extend wireless service into the region in order to incent internet service providers to expand service, primarily fixed wireless, in our region.

The Project is Phase II of an ongoing regional effort to improve broadband service in our 7-county region. Phase I, completed in 2017, included a survey that received approximately 5,000 responses. Phase I also provided training for members of county broadband committee members and local officials covering the following topics: net neutrality, legal and regulatory matters; “broadband friendly” policies and administrative policy; types of public/private partnership models; and review of community survey data.

## **B. Description of Services Requested**

### **a. Complete a regional inventory of “vertical broadband assets”**

The Project will include conducting a comprehensive inventory of “vertical broadband assets” in the region. The inventory will also include information about asset ownership and opportunities for co-location. This information will then be combined with data collected from Phase I to match demand throughout the region with the opportunity to meet that demand. This project is designed to follow steps outlined in the “Community Broadband Playbook” by the North Carolina Broadband Infrastructure Office (<https://www.ncbroadband.gov/playbook/assets-and-needs/vetting-vertical-assets/>). Work for this project will include steps 2-11 below:

1. **Identify the areas that need improved service.** *Completed during Phase I of this Project.*
2. **Review and validate the individual tower data provided by the counties that have performed vertical asset inventories.**
3. **Use tools (like Google Earth Pro) to identify and map any vertical assets.**
4. **Drive-By and Visit.**
5. **Contact the Asset Owner.**
6. **Examine Tower Ordinances.**
7. **Develop strategies for potential projects using data from Phase I.**
8. **Contact and solicit the frequencies (Spectrum) used by the existing Wireless Companies in the region so that the results of the study can identify any signal contention**

concerns that may arise in the future based on any of the recommendations made. The Commission has a list that includes, but is not limited to, the Wireless Companies in the region to help with this effort.

9. **Identify and map known fiber assets and their ownership.** Engage the NC Broadband Infrastructure Office's technical assistance team for an available broadband infrastructure assessment. Using Fiber Locator and other tools, the Broadband Infrastructure Office can help identify what known fiber assets may be in the area, and the ownership of those assets. Include this in final report.
  10. **Share the findings with regional broadband providers to help fill the gaps.**
- b. **Present report to the Southwestern Commission and the Mountain West Partnership.**
  - c. **Present update at a convening of regional stakeholders.**

### C. Proposal Instructions

#### a. Deadline

Proposals must be received by 5:00 PM eastern time on **May 31, 2019**.

#### b. Submittal Instructions

Proposals should be emailed (becca@regiona.org) or delivered to:

Southwestern Commission

ATTN: Becca Scott

125 Bonnie Lane

Sylva, NC 28779

#### c. Project Contact

The point of contact for the Project is Becca Scott, Senior Project Manager for the SWC.

Prospective firms may make inquiries to obtain clarification of the requirements contained in this Request for Proposals (RFP). All inquiries must be submitted by email to the following address: becca@regiona.org. A response will be issued typically within two business days.

#### d. Proposal Format

Proposals should be limited to 15 numbered pages or less. Please include a cover letter that identifies a contact person and all contact information. The following format is not required but is encouraged to provide consistency between proposals, aiding in evaluation and comparison. If the format is modified please include the following information at a minimum.

**1) Project Approach.** Describe your team's approach to successfully delivering the Project.

Provide details on how each task will be completed. Include any recommendations for maximizing effectiveness and efficiency.

**2) Relevant Project Experience.** Provide a summary of your experience with similar projects, including location and client contact information. Specify the services provided, the office location from which the work was performed, and staff members' responsibilities. Web links to recent plans and past work, if available, may be included in addition to project summaries.

**3) Project Team.** Provide an organizational chart identifying all staff assigned to Project, including any sub-consultants, defining roles, responsibilities, and task assignments of each member for the duration of the Project.

**4) Qualifications of Personnel.** Provide relevant experience and qualifications of all personnel assigned to the Project.

- 5) **Plan for Completion.** Provide an outline for keeping the project on schedule and within budget. Include projected workloads and staff availability, as well as a projected schedule for completion of significant milestones and the draft and final Plan.
- 6) **References.** Provide contact information for at least three references for clients familiar with your work.

#### **D. Evaluation Criteria**

Proposals should address all aspects of the RFP and clearly express an understanding of the requirements and qualifications to conduct these services in a thorough and efficient manner. Evaluation of proposals will be performed by SWC staff and members of the Mountain West Partnership. Proposals will be evaluated on the firm's ability to meet the requirements of this RFP. Some evaluation criteria, among other factors, will include:

1. Project approach and demonstrated understanding of the goals for the project;
2. Familiarity with and understanding of the nature and challenges of the region and stakeholders;
3. Creative approaches for deliverables that can be easily utilized in a variety of mediums including hard copy and digital reports, websites, etc.
4. Qualifications and availability of staff assigned to the Project;

Candidate firms may be asked to present their proposal to SWC staff and Mountain West Partnership members before the final selection is made. Final selection and contracting will be subject to approval by SWC.

#### **E. Tentative Project Schedule**

In order to ensure high-quality products, adequate time for review and revisions will be scheduled and included in the contractual agreement. All meeting materials (maps, presentations, handouts, displays, etc.) will be submitted for review prior to scheduled meetings. Timelines for reviews and revisions will be detailed in the contractual agreement. The following schedule is provided as a guideline only.

<b>May 6, 2019</b>	Request for Proposals advertised
<b>May 31, 2019</b>	Proposals due to SWC
<b>June 3-21, 2019</b>	Selection and Contracting
<b>June 24, 2019</b>	Notice to Proceed
<b>November 1, 2019</b>	Draft Wireless Propagation Study Report Due
<b>December 1, 2019</b>	Final Wireless Propagation Study Report Due
<b>TBD</b>	Present Findings to SWC and MWP
<b>TBD</b>	Present Findings at Regional Broadband Summit

## **F. Budget**

The budget for this project is \$50,000. No additional expenses shall be incurred without the express prior written authorization from SWC.

## **G. Administrative Information**

1. All proposals become the property of SWC upon submission and will only be returned at SWC's option. Any restrictions on the use of the data contained within must be clearly stated in the proposal itself.
2. The cost of preparing, submitting and presenting a proposal is the sole expense of the consultant. SWC is not liable for any costs prior to issuance of a signed contract.
3. SWC reserves the right to reject any and all proposals, to consider alternatives, to wave irregularities and to re-solicit the request for proposals.
4. SWC reserves the right to cancel the RFP in part or in its entirety. This solicitation of proposals in no way obligates SWC to award a contract.
5. SWC makes no guarantees to any proposing firm until such time SWC approves the negotiated contract.
6. All Proposals must be valid for a period of 90 days after the due date.
7. The contents from the selected firm will become contractual obligations if a subsequent agreement is reached. Failure of the selected firm to accept these obligations may result in cancellation of the award.
8. SWC will provide information and assistance with this project where available. SWC will be the primary point of contact with all county and municipal governments.