



REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

Broadband Feasibility Study

The City of Harvard, Illinois, is seeking proposals from qualified firms to conduct a feasibility study for a broadband fiber-to-the premises network.

Proposals are due no later than 4:00 PM CST on April 5, 2024

GENERAL CONDITIONS

1. DESCRIPTION

The City of Harvard, Illinois (“City”) is interested in engaging a qualified Engineering and/or Broadband Consulting firm to develop a detailed, actionable broadband feasibility study. The selected firm shall have demonstrated previous experience in developing broadband feasibility studies and assisting with the implementation of the plan.

The City considers a modern digital infrastructure to be a critical component of a competitive city of the future and wishes to ensure that it is well-positioned to meet the current and future needs of its residents, businesses, and anchor institutions. The service territory of this network will include every residential home and commercial/industrial facility within the corporate limits of the City of Harvard and to include the townships immediately outside the corporate boundary.

The desired outcome of this planning effort is to provide a tool for the City to establish if Harvard residents and businesses have a need and want this service, determine a successful deployment strategy and the associated cost to implement fiber to the premises (“FTTP”), and assess whether such project will be sufficiently supported by customer rates to justify the investment in this infrastructure.

2. BACKGROUND

The Harvard City Council has identified broadband as a key priority and wishes to do its due diligence by examining various ways to improve broadband connectivity in the community. Several acceptable pathways to achieving this goal have been identified:

- a) A municipal-owned and operated fiber-to-the-premises (FTTP) network;
- b) A public-private partnership with a private provider whereby the City builds the infrastructure and leases fiber to the private provider to operate a FTTP network providing high-speed internet service to the residents and businesses at a reasonable rate; or,
- c) Any combination of public and private ownership that serves the best interests of Harvard and its citizens.

The City is located in the Northwest County of McHenry County, approximately 7 miles south of the Illinois/Wisconsin border. Harvard is part of the Chicago Metropolitan Area, and is within 90 minutes of from Chicago, Rockford and Milwaukee. The major thoroughfares include Rte. 14, Rte. 173 and a stop on the UP Northwest Metra rail. The population is 9,469.

City staff will cooperate with the selected consultant to provide any additional technical or background information that may be necessary to conduct the feasibility study.

SCOPE OF SERVICES

3. Internet Speed, Network Design, and Cost Estimate

The Harvard Feasibility Study will provide an approach for determining the current level of demand for affordable, accessible, and reliable broadband service in the City. It will provide an education/community engagement plan that the City can use to inform residents and businesses about the future benefits of a robust broadband infrastructure. The study will also build usage City-wide IT map in its current state. This will include but is not limited to, fiber/internet services, wireless point-to-point systems, and wireless cell data usage for all departments.

The feasibility study will provide a pre-engineering or high-level design for both an active Ethernet and passive optical design (PON) of the City's broadband infrastructure.

The feasibility study will provide recommendations for the model option(s) the City should consider for the delivery of affordable, accessible, reliable broadband services. For each model option recommendation, provide an analysis of its financial risk to the City and the level of control that it affords the City. Each model option recommendation will include an operation and maintenance plan, a marketing plan, a governance plan, and an implementation plan. A pro forma analysis is required for each option recommendation.

The feasibility study will provide an analysis of possible capital funding options that the City should consider.

Qualifications for responding to the RFP include a vendor's financial summary, broadband feasibility studies and related broadband experience with references, and the identification of partners and subcontractors that will be participating in the project.

RFP REQUIREMENTS

Each of the RFP requirements will be evaluated using one of the following:

- ***Highly Advantageous:*** The submitted documentation is superior in relation to the described requirement.
- ***Advantageous:*** The submitted documentation is adequate in relation to the described requirement.
- ***Not Advantageous:*** The submitted documentation is less than adequate in relation to the described requirement.

1. Demand for Broadband Service – Respondent will develop an approach for estimating the demand for affordable, accessible, and reliable broadband service in the City of Harvard.

The respondent will develop an approach for estimating the current state of broadband in the City. The approach will include:

- An assessment of actual broadband speeds (downland/upload) speeds and ping provided by incumbent providers/
- An approach for determining the level of satisfaction with existing broadband services.
- An approach for determining the estimated demand for services from an additional service provider(s)
 - Lower cost
 - Improved reliability
 - Higher speeds/symmetrical service
 - Improved customer service
 - Residential and business customers

2. Education/Community engagement plan

The respondent will develop an education/community engagement plan including the supporting materials that can be used to educate and engage city residents and businesses about the future benefits of broadband across various sectors – healthcare, education, economic development, public safety, and government services.

Educational/community engagement materials will be suitable for presenting at City Council meetings and other public information sessions.

An educational/community engagement process that reinforces the future benefits of broadband that focuses on using social media and the City's website is required.

The plan will include a recommended approach for community engagement including using various communication channels, i.e., in-person meetings, and social media.

The respondent will include an option for supporting the City's implementation of the education/community engagement plan including, if requested, facilitating City Hall or public information sessions.

3. Engineering design options – Respondent will develop a pre-engineering broadband network design.

The respondent will develop a pre-engineering broadband infrastructure network design. The pre-engineering deliverable is a high-level design with the goal of understanding the

overall capital cost of constructing the broadband infrastructure network. A detailed engineering design is not required, but the respondent will provide an estimate of what it would cost to go from the result of a high-level engineering design to a detailed engineering study.

Harvard is interested in the pre-engineering design capital cost of both a passive optic network (PON) and an active ethernet network.

The respondent is requested to address how the broadband infrastructure network design will support wireless technology such as a small cell technology that will be required to support 4G LTE densification and 5G technology.

4. Broadband model option(s) recommendation – Respondent will recommend broadband model option(s) for Harvard to review.

The respondent will develop broadband model option(s) recommendations for the City of Harvard to consider. Included in the model options, the respondent will have considered at least one option to partner with nearby communities to create a regional system. Each model option recommended will include a control/financial risk analysis based on the following definitions:

- Control – network ownership including decisions on how it is operated.
- Financial risk – investment associated with developing and running the network balanced against revenue generated.
- Sustainability to support emerging technologies.

Models that minimize the City's financial risk are of the most interest, but the City Council is open to considering models with a balance between control and financial risk. The City Council is interested in the feasibility of a municipal broadband infrastructure network, but it is open to reviewing the franchising model and coop option proposals.

For each broadband model recommendation, the respondent will include a five-year pro-forma analysis that includes:

- Operational cost
 - ◆ Marketing
 - ◆ Customer Service
 - ◆ Billing
- Maintenance cost
 - ◆ Infrastructure maintenance
 - ◆ Electronic refresh
- Debt service cost
- Revenue projections
 - ◆ Take-rate
 - ◆ Pricing

◆ Types of services offered (data packages)

The pro-forma analysis will be provided in a format (Microsoft Excel preferred) that permits varying assumptions such as take rate estimates, pricing options, operations, and maintenance costs.

Models that recommend Harvard own and/or operate the network will include these plans:

- Marketing plan
- Operations plan
- Maintenance plan
- Municipal governance plan
- Implementation plan

5. Capital funding options – Respondent will identify potential capital funding options

Respondent will identify potential funding options that may be available to the City of Harvard. Examples include:

- Federal or state government grants or low-interest loans
- Public Private Partnerships (PPP)
- Municipal bond options
- Tax options

6. Respondent qualifications – Respondent will provide the following information

- High-level project plan and schedule for delivery of the feasibility study.
- Ability to develop a City-wide system IT map of municipal services including, but not limited to fiber/internet services, wireless point-to-point systems, and wireless cell data usage.
- Overview description of the vendor leading the feasibility study including 3-year financial summary.
- Summary of experience performing broadband feasibility studies or similar broadband projects completed in the past three years.
- References/contact information for broadband feasibility studies or similar broadband projects completed in the past three years.
- Professional credentials of partner/contractor firms that will be working under the lead vendor.
- Resumes of key individuals that will be working on the project – project managers, analysts, engineers, and attorneys.

- Communities where the respondent has or is currently in the process of completing a similar study. Preference will be given to respondents with the most proven local experience.

Requirement #	Cost
1. Demand for broadband service	
2. Education/community engagement plan	
3. Engineering design options	
4. Broadband model option(s) recommendation	
5. Capital funding options	
6. Respondent qualifications	
Total Cost	

The proposal submission deadline is 4:00 PM CST on April 5, 2024

RFP Timeline

Activity	Responsible Party	Deadline
Release RFP	City	March 7, 2024
Proposer Question Due	Proposers	March 8 – 22, 2024
Answers to Questions Due	City	March 29, 2024
Proposals Due	Proposers	April 5, 2024
Evaluation Period	City	April 2024
Finalist Presentation(s)	Proposers	April 2024 DTBD
Vendor Selection	City	April 23, 2024
Vendor Start Date	Selected Vendor	May 1, 2024
Delivery of Final Feasibility Study	Selected Vendor	TBD

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Questions and Replies

To ensure that all prospective respondents accurately and completely understand the RFP requirements, the City will accept written questions via e-mail to the City Administrator by the date and time listed below. Replies to all questions will be sent via blind copy to all registered vendors.

Only one point of contact is offered to respondents for this procurement and all communication must be accomplished exclusively by e-mail submission of questions to the procurement contract. No other direct or indirect contract is to be made during this RFP period with the procurement contact or with any other member of the City concerning this project. Violation of these project rules may be cause for the rejection of any submitted proposal.

Questions must be submitted by March 22, 2024

2. Proposed Submission

Electronic submittal - Each proposer must submit electronically at: leone@cityofharvard.org. The City is not accepting paper copies for this RFP. Proposals shall include all requested information, forms and certifications in order to be considered responsive.

Proposals must be submitted by 4:00 PM CST on April 5, 2024.

All submittals are to be clearly marked "Attention: City Administrator – Broadband Feasibility Study RFP".

All proposals and accompanying documentation will become the property of the City and will not be returned.

Proposals shall be good for 180 days following the date of submission.

3. Proposed Award

The award, if any, shall be made to the firm whose proposal is deemed by the City to be in the best interest of the City. The decision of the City of whether to make the award and which proposal is in the best interest of the City shall be final.

4. Signature of Responsible Party

All proposals must be signed with firm name and by a responsible officer or employee authorized to transact business on behalf of the organization, partnership, or corporation. No organization may assign or transfer any legal or equitable interest in their proposal after the date and hour set for the receipt of proposals.

5. City's Rights Reserved

The City reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals in whole or in part, to waive any irregularities in any proposal(s) which, in the judgment of the City is/are most advantageous to the City and to re-advertise if desired. The City reserves the right to negotiate with any provider(s).

6. Conflict of Interest

The provider agrees that it presently has no interest, and shall acquire no interest, direct or indirect, that would conflict in any manner or degree with the performance of its services hereunder. The provider further agrees that, in the performance of the agreement, no person having any such interest shall be employed.

7. Interest of Public Officials

No member, officer, or employee of the City during this tenure or for one year thereafter, shall have any interest, direct or indirect, in this proposal or the proceeds thereof.

8. Insurance, Hold Harmless and Indemnification

The successful proposer shall maintain limits no less than the following:

- a) Workers Compensation and Employers' Liability
 - i. Workers' Compensation coverage with statutory limits and Employers' Liability limits of \$500,000 per accident.
- b) Professional Liability
 - i. Limits not less than \$1,000,000 each claim with respect to negligent acts, errors and omissions in connection with professional services to be provided under the contract, with a deductible not-to-exceed \$50,000 without prior written approval.

c) Commercial General Liability

- i. \$1,000,000 combined single limit per occurrence for bodily injury and property damage and \$1,000,000 per occurrence for personal injury. The general aggregate shall be twice the required occurrence limit. Minimum general aggregate shall be no less than \$2,000,000.

d) Business Automobile Liability

- i. \$1,000,000 combined single limit per accident for bodily injury and property damage.

e) An Umbrella Insurance Policy in an amount not less than \$1,000,000 per occurrence.

The provider agrees to protect, defend, indemnify, and hold harmless City, its elected and appointed officials, agents, and employees from and against any and all liability, damages, claims, suites, liens, and judgment, of whatever nature, including claims for contribution and/or indemnification, for injuries to any person or persons, caused by organization's proposals or subsequent submittals.

The provider's obligation to protect, defend, indemnify, and hold harmless, as set forth hereinabove, shall include any matter arising out of any actual or alleged infringement of any patent, trademark, copyright, or service mark, or any actual or alleged unfair completion, disparagement of product or service, or other business tort of any type whatsoever, or any actual or alleged violation of trade regulations.

9. Ownership and Disclosure

All documents and materials prepared pursuant to this proposal are the property of the City. All information submitted to the City in response to this RFP will be a public record and will be subject to disclosure, subject to applicable exemptions, under the Illinois Freedom of Information Act, 5 ILCS 140, et seq. ("Act"), after the award of the contract. Proposers are advised that Section 7(1)(g) of that Act exempts the following information from disclosure: Trade secrets and commercial or financial information obtained from a person or business where the trade secrets or commercial or financial information are furnished under a claim that they are proprietary, privileged or confidential, and that disclosure of the trade secrets or commercial or financial information would cause competitive harm to the person or business, and only insofar as the claim directly applies to the records requested. Proposers that desire to have portions of their proposals considered for this exemption should identify those portions accordingly.

10. Independent Contractor Relationship

The proposer is and shall perform any services related to any contract resulting from this RFP as an independent contractor, and as such, shall have and maintain complete control over all of its employees, agents, and operations. Neither the proposer nor anyone employed by it shall represent, act, purport to act or be deemed to be the agent, representative, employee or servant of the City of Harvard.

The proposer selected by this RFP will be working as an independent contractor and will be required to take out and keep in force, all permits, licenses, certifications, other approvals, and or insurance that may be required by the City, any local or regional governmental agency, the State of Illinois, or the federal government. Failure to comply with any of these items would be grounds for immediate cancellation of the contract.

11. Withdrawal of Proposals

Proposals may be withdrawn at any time prior to the deadline, provided that a written, signed request by the Proposer for the withdrawal of such proposal is filed with the Village prior to the deadline. The withdrawal of a proposal prior to the deadline will not prejudice the right of a proposer to submit a timely new proposal. No proposal shall be withdrawn without the consent of the Village for a period of 60 days after the deadline.

12. Equal Opportunity

Illinois human rights laws require that any contractor or vendor to the City of Harvard and other public bodies in the State of Illinois agree to be bound by Illinois human rights laws and their nondiscrimination requirements. The law requires a nondiscrimination clause be included in the City's contracts and contract specifications. The requirements of a nondiscrimination clause shall be included in all contracts, and contract specifications. The required language shall be in the form of the following typed statement on the applicable document:

This [contractor or contract specification] incorporates by reference the equal employment opportunity clause which the Illinois Department of Human Rights requires in all contracts and contract specifications. This clause is set forth in 44 Ill. Admin. Code Sec. 750 (Appendix A) and is contained in the City's purchasing and contracting policy. By acceptance of this contract, the [vendor or contractor] agrees to comply with the clause and all other rules and regulations of the Illinois Department of Human Rights covering employment opportunity. The [vendor or contractor] also acknowledges that it has a written sexual harassment policy which complies with Section 2-105 of the Illinois Human Rights Act, 775 ILCS 5/2-105.