

Request for Information (“RFI”)

For

High-Speed Internet/Broadband Services Planning and Services

September 26, 2023

Proposal Submission Deadline:

October 31, 2023

Mail or Hand Deliver RFI Documents To Primary Contact:

Colleen Rosson
Grants Administrator
700 Bank St., Wallace ID, 83873
crosson@co.shoshone.id.us

Note: This **is not** a request for proposals.

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

SUBJECT: High-Speed Internet/Broadband Service Planning, Expansion, or Delivery
INQUIRIES: All inquiries or questions must be directed to Colleen Rosson, Shoshone County, Grants Administrator; 700 Bank St., Wallace ID, 83873; crosson@co.shoshone.id.us.

Questions must be received no later than October 3, 2023. If a determination is made that a clarification or change to the RFI document is required, a written addendum will be posted on the appropriate sections of the websites of the Issuers. Respondents are responsible for obtaining all RFI updates.

Responses must be delivered at the following address no later than 5 p.m. **October 31, 2023.**

Attn: Colleen Rosson
Grants Administrator
700 Bank St., Wallace ID, 83873
crosson@co.shoshone.id.us

Submit one (1) hard copy and one (1) electronic copy (via email to crosson@co.shoshone.id.us) of your response including any product literature or data. Submittals must be labeled:

“RFI for High-Speed Internet/Broadband Service Planning, Expansion, or Delivery”

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In anticipation of Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) funding grants issued by the State of Idaho, the County of Shoshone and its Board of Commissioners have been working with a group of concerned residents to find alternatives to improve internet service throughout the County. This is a summary of the accomplishments of this workgroup.

The County recognizes the importance of access to high-speed internet services to all residents and businesses in the county. The Commission has interviewed, surveyed, and heard from many residents about the quality of their existing service, their frustration with lack of previously committed broadband delivery, and the absence of plans for improvement. In addition, many residents have completed speed tests to validate their actual level of service received. These results have been gathered over the past two years and indicate a need for a comprehensive plan for the entire county so that high-speed broadband of at least 100/20 Mbps can be provided to every resident and business in the county. Additionally, every Community Anchor Institution (CAI), identified by the residents and submitted to the Idaho State Broadband Office, should receive 1Gbps symmetrical service. These requirements are aligned with the BEAD requirements issued by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA.)

Shoshone County, hereinafter referred to as “County,” issues this Request for Interest (“RFI”) to gather ideas and interest from service providers of high-speed internet/broadband (hereafter “internet”) services to work with the County to plan for affordable, reliable high-speed internet access for residential, business, and government constituents throughout the County.

This RFI is intended to outline the market opportunity and invite interested providers to submit their ideas for new or expanded service delivery in the County. This process marks the beginning of the required collaborative planning between providers and their communities served in order to qualify for BEAD funding.

Shoshone County has recently qualified as a VERY HIGH COST area by the NTIA which means that dedicated BEAD funding and a waiver of matching funds will apply during the BEAD grant process.

The County seeks ideas and interest from respondents on how to achieve the sole object to provide high-speed internet/broadband service in underserved or unserved areas throughout the county. High-speed internet/broadband service can include, but is not limited to, the deployment of a fiber-to-the-home solution or a fixed wireless solution for all Broadband Service Locations (BSLs) identified by the FCC in the National Broadband Access Map (NBAM.) Interested parties should provide information on how its services can meet the BEAD’s broadband benchmark speeds of 100 megabits per second (Mbps) for downloads and 20 Mbps for uploads as minimum performance standards for all BSLs and the targeted 1Gbps symmetrical service for all CAIs requiring that speed.

Realizing that multiple partners may be required to provide service to the entire county, the RFI response should indicate specific areas of prospective coverage, specific technology choices, estimated timelines for deployment and post deployment service and support plans to include low-cost subscription options as required in the BEAD plans.

In addition, the County is prepared to consider offerings for building versus operating these high-speed broadband services. The collaboration between providers to cover the entire county or to build and operate would be received positively. The County does not intend to own or operate services or facilities but would consider ownership if the appropriate partnerships can be secured to provide timely infrastructure build commitments and effective operations.

Note: The County welcomes responses to this RFI from ALL interested or potentially interested parties. Since this is **only** to solicit preliminary interest and ideas, this RFI **should not** be interpreted as an invitation for bids or request for proposals. For the purposes of this RFI, the terms “respondents,” “providers,” and “vendors” refer to entities submitting written responses to this RFI.

2. RFI TIMELINE

A. Important Dates

| | |
|---|---------------------------|
| Publish RFI | September 26, 2023 |
| Deadline for Questions | October 3, 2023 |
| Responses Due by 5 p.m. | October 31, 2023 |
| Review of responses completed by County | November 16, 2023 |

B. Contact for questions and information requests

All general communications regarding the RFI or requests for additional information should be directed to:

Colleen Rosson
Grants Administrator
700 Bank St., Wallace ID, 83873
crosson@co.shoshone.id.us

C. Further Process

Shoshone County will evaluate the information gathered through this RFI process and determine whether to proceed with a formal request for proposals (RFP).

An electronic copy may be downloaded from here: https://us01.z.antigena.com/1/kUegk5Dmd88xH3GILvMi1wkkiM5Hr9sMGkr_4o8LSU1jYEDXY2ybR9vecJAM2xx_1AagAB4ozXhLygGRggBh1PdPt5Wa979XCUyj5uDCxryDnm56_ke97k-ZduDykIaZURcUm-sfDd8DU2YM28rPuduNYLNAXeTUPsYrIU_zljLf48X.

Access to County data for the identification of demand and assets is available by request.

Any amendment or addendum to this RFI is valid only if issued in writing by Shoshone County.

Any changes in the process or updates to the schedule above will be posted on the websites of the County.

3. OBJECTIVES OF RFI

Located in eastern side of Idaho's northern panhandle, Shoshone County has seven (7) incorporated cities that stretch along the Interstate 90 corridor. This corridor is known as the Silver Valley and is a beautiful, mineral rich, and history laden landscape. Shoshone is recognized for its year-round recreational opportunities and is a great place to live, work, and raise a family.

Mining is and almost always has been the county's best-known industry. The county's Silver Valley is one of the nation's greatest mining regions. Shoshone County is also forest country. Until recently, timber has been a mainstay of the county's natural resources economy.

Shoshone County stretches over a large land area. It covers 2,636 square miles of mountains and valleys. Fully eighty-seven (87) percent of its land area (or 1,888,941 acres) is classified as "forest uplands." Less than one (1) percent (only 6,027 acres) is "urban or developed."

Housing Data

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Housing units | 7067 |
| Homeownership rate | 72.9% |
| Median value of owner-occupied housing units 2009-2013 | \$141,800 |
| Persons per household | 2.37 |
| Language spoken other than English | 3.1% |
| Households with a computer | 88.3% |
| Households with a broadband subscription | 80.9% |

These factors contribute to Shoshone County's RFI for an internet solution that will serve residents, businesses, and governments throughout the County. Because areas of the County are currently underserved or have no internet service, the County wishes to obtain high-quality internet access at the BEAD benchmark speeds of 100 megabits per second (Mbps) for downloads and 20 Mbps for uploads for its citizens and to encourage economic development. Specifically, the County would also like businesses to receive 100/100 Mbps symmetrical service and for all CAIs to receive 1Gbps symmetrical service as required by the NTIA.

The County is relying on the private sector in this effort and is seeking last-mile internet service providers to serve the underserved or unserved rural areas of the County. A county-wide solution is optimal; however, certain areas could potentially be chosen as a pilot for providers that do not have an existing footprint in the County. Incumbent providers are strongly encouraged to provide information as to proposed or future deployment in the identified unserved and underserved areas of the County. It should be noted that prior to endorsement for any funding opportunities, all providers will be required to provide enforceable commitment letters to the County and may be required to do the same to the State of Idaho Broadband Office.

The County believes that increased deployment of affordable broadband services is key to fostering innovation, driving job creation, and stimulating economic growth. Respondents to this RFI should provide options or recommendations to provide service to unserved or underserved areas.

4. REQUESTED INFORMATION

4.1. Cover Sheet (Attachment A)

- 4.1.1. Provide the full legal name of the Provider and the type of entity.
- 4.1.2. The cover sheet must be signed by an owner, corporate officer, or agent authorized by the Provider.
- 4.1.3. The names of all principals of the Provider must be disclosed on the cover sheet; specifically, all persons who have an equity interest in the Provider organization and/or hold a senior leadership position in the Provider organization.

4.2. Previous Experience

- 4.2.1. Identify previous experience in providing internet services and broadband content in other markets.
- 4.2.2. Identify customer segments served.
- 4.2.3. Provide services and content offered, including pricing and contract terms.
- 4.2.4. Provide customer service capabilities and technical support practices, including service standards
- 4.2.5. Identify three references (names and contact information) who are familiar with your previous experience as a service provider.

4.3. Preliminary proposal for Internet service and broadband content you would offer in the Shoshone County market

- 4.3.1. Provide a detailed preliminary description of Internet service and broadband content you would propose to offer in the Shoshone County market
- 4.3.2. What customer segments would you serve?
- 4.3.3. What services and content would you offer to various customer segments, including pricing and contract terms?
- 4.3.4. What Customer Service and Technical Support would you offer?
 - 4.3.4.1. How and where would you staff this?
 - 4.3.4.2. What service standards would you provide?
 - 4.3.4.3. What low-cost options would you provide for residents? Businesses?

4.4. Other information, advice, or counsel you would offer to Shoshone County with respect to this project

4.5. Please provide evidence or examples of high-speed broadband service that you currently offer or operate to include the following:

- 4.5.1. Provide detailed maps of your network/facility routes that could approach or impact any proposal in Shoshone County
- 4.5.2. Provide examples of current adoption rates experienced in similarly situated counties.
- 4.5.3. Provide examples of your existing low-cost options to include:

4.5.3.1. Public awareness campaigns

4.5.3.2. Adoption rates

4.5.3.3. Terms and conditions

4.6. Provide information on previously awarded funds for high-speed broadband deployment and/or operations to include:

4.6.1. Grantor

4.6.2. Amount Received

4.6.3. Length of grant

4.6.4. Progress in committed deployments

5. AREAS OF COOPERATION

To the extent not covered in previous responses, this section highlights ways that the County could cooperate with respondents to improve the business case for proposed solutions. We encourage respondents to be creative and suggest other types of partnerships or business opportunities of interest.

Specifically, this section could include:

1. **Resources and facilities:** Explanation of need for access to community assets and resources. Respondents should also address the relative importance and impact of variations in terms of more flexibility with respect to accessing the following types of community assets, facilities, and policies:
 - a. Pole Attachments
 - b. Utility conduits
 - c. Dark fiber
 - d. Backhaul or ISP partnerships involving local, statewide or regional fiber assets
 - e. Public rights of way
 - f. Undergrounding policies
 - g. Other community assets, facilities (including radio towers) or policies not specifically mentioned above.
2. **Regulatory environment:** Description of any rules or regulations at the federal, state, or local level that could impact the feasibility or underlying economics associated with the proposed solutions. Responses should also include an explanation of any forms of proposed regulatory relief, including streamlined permitting, which could improve the economic case for the business models or network solutions proposed or for other network solutions that respondents considered but dismissed due to existing regulations and their effect on economic viability of such proposal.
3. **Contracting issues:** Explanation of any material considerations or expectations that respondents have with respect to any of the following issues likely to be negotiated during any future Requests for Proposals:
 - a. Intellectual property
 - b. Insurance

- c. Indemnities
 - d. Warranties
 - e. Dispute resolution
 - f. problems with current providers if any.
 - g. Other contracting issues not specifically listed above.
4. **Other partnership or revenue opportunities:** Discussion of any other types of partnerships or working relationships between respondents and supporters which could improve the business case for respondents to partner with one or more supporters. For example, a company may work with universities and the surrounding communities to develop partnerships that allow the company to deliver voice, video, and data services, and/or to pilot cutting-edge new products, recruit new employees, or enter branding and marketing agreements.

6. TERMS, CONDITIONS AND DISCLAIMERS FOR RFI

Responses to this RFI become the exclusive property of the County. All documents submitted in response to this RFI may be regarded as public records and may be subject to disclosure. This RFI is issued solely for information and planning purposes and does not constitute a solicitation. No material submitted in response to this RFI will be returned. Respondents are solely responsible for all expenses associated with responding to this RFI.

a. Confidentiality

All submissions are subject to Idaho Public Records Law. To the extent that respondents desire to submit proprietary information to the County, the County represents that it will use all reasonable efforts to claim available exemptions under the Idaho Public Records Law and will notify the affected respondent if a request is received in connection with that proprietary information. The respondent will be given an opportunity to seek court action to prevent release of information. All materials that the respondent believes are proprietary MUST be labeled "CONFIDENTIAL." The County cannot guarantee that its efforts to claim available exemptions will be successful and the County may be required to disclose the respondent's information, even that which is labeled proprietary, privileged and/or confidential.

b. Incurred Costs

The County will not be liable in any way for any costs incurred by respondents in replying to this RFI, including, but not limited to, costs associated with preparing the response or participating in any site visits, demonstrations, conferences, or oral presentations.

ATTACHMENT A: COVER SHEET

| | |
|--|--|
| Name of Person, Business or Organization: | |
| Type of Entity: (e.g. Sole-Proprietorship, Partnership, Corp., Non-Profit, Public Agency) | |
| Federal Tax ID Number: | |
| Contact Person – Name | |
| Contact Person – Address | |
| Contact Person – Phone Number (s) | |
| Contact Person – e-mail address | |

By signing this *Cover Sheet* I hereby attest: that I have read and understood all the terms listed in the RFI and I have read and understood all terms listed in this request.

Signature of Authorized Representative
Representative

Printed Name of Authorized

Date

Printed Title of Authorized Representative