



BROADBAND FEASIBILITY STUDY

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

SEPTEMBER 8, 2021

INTRODUCTION

Socorro Electric Cooperative SEC is seeking proposals for a broadband feasibility/engineering study.

The purpose this RFP is to provide the SEC with the information needed to analyze, select and implement the best solutions to improve broadband connectivity across our entire SEC service area so that our network(s) are an asset for community and economic development. The SEC recognizes reaching our goal of fiber to the premise (FTTP) will in a phased build-out plans. Flexibility, ingenuity and innovation along with a cohesiveness in design will be necessary to reach the ultimate goal of digitally connecting the SEC's member through a world-class, next generation network.

Our vision:

All Socorro Electric Cooperative SEC members will be able to use convenient, affordable world-class broadband networks that enable us to survive and thrive in our communities.

To achieve this vision, we seek the best path to a ubiquitous broadband network that is ultimately scalable to one Gigabit to homes, businesses and anchor institutions recognizing that this may require a 10 Gigabit backbone. We recognize that there are a variety of models that could be used to achieve our vision and we are open to all of them, including incenting private sector investment, engaging in a public-private partnership, or forming a new cooperative

We expect this to be highly interactive and iterative process, with excellent and ongoing communications between the selected vendor and the board committee so that at the end of the study process, the committee clearly understands the best alternatives for moving forward to achieve the vision.

DESCRIPTION OF SOCORRO ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Members per miles of line 3.8

Total miles of overhead energized line 3,109

County served: Socorro County

Counties partial served: Catron, Cibola, Lincoln, Sierra, Torrance and Valencia

Most populated density service area City of Socorro

SEC CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE FEASIBILITY STUDY PROJECT

To support the selected vendor, the SEC will, at a minimum, provide the following:

- Recruitment of a project steering team
- Recruitment of focus group participants
- Access to SEC GIS data
- Access to historical SEC Permit Data
- Other public information as needed

SCOPE OF WORK/REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

This section outlines the study and report requirements.

Section A – Current assessment and market demand

- Review of the competitive environment
 - Complete an inventory of existing fiber networks within the SEC, including ownership and availability for use by other network providers.
 - Provide an overview of current broadband providers' services, pricing strategies and coverage area. To the extent possible, determine and analyze the investment and deployment plans of incumbent providers.

- Map existing the location of existing fiber and broadband-related electronics and available broadband speeds available by provider. This information should be provided in a format usable by the SEC GIS systems.
- Provide an assessment of the services available to our existing and prospective businesses and how that impacts our economic development efforts.
- Provide a market study to establish a likely market penetration rate and clarify which benefits from a new SEC network might be most important to the members and businesses. Include information from the following sources
 - Available market and census data

Section B – Technology options

- Determine the best technology path for our SEC
 - What are the broadband capacities and considerations that are necessary now and in the future that will enable our SEC to be economically competitive? What FTTP technologies can provide broadband services at those speeds?
 - What are the technologies best suited to the various areas of the SEC based on geography and demographics?
 - Provide an assessment of network design options, common vendor and technology alternatives, and related high-level price estimates. Findings should include data summarizing technical capabilities of design alternatives.
 - What opportunities exist to provide a protected-ring fiber network that would connect businesses and anchor institutions such as schools, libraries, hospitals, public safety, cities, institutions of higher education and community support organizations?
- Options for services provision to include:

- Firm will research and present common business model alternatives for the operation of a telco utility – owned FTTP network. Phased build out plans with scalable to 1 gigabit.
- Provide analysis including, but not limited to Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), video, data, security, education and potential bundled service options.
- Business models and pro forma to be analyzed to include but not be limited to:
 - a) Create new networks:
 1. Open Access: The SEC would finance and contract to build the network and invite other service providers to contract to deliver services over the network.
 2. Proprietary Network:
 - i. The SEC would build and operate the network, with or without private sector operating partners
 - ii. The SEC would incent a private sector partner, including existing cooperatives, the creation of a new cooperative, or other entity to invest, build and operate a network by using development powers as necessary.
 3. Other options that might involve multiple local entities or other scenarios as contractor sees appropriate.
- Conduct pre-engineering study(s) at sufficient depth to estimate costs and approximate implementation timeframes for full network implementation.
 - This evaluation should include an assessment of all available mainstream high-speed technologies either alone or in combination and include an assessment and consideration of both Fiber to the Premise (FTTP) and wireless technologies. All parts, materials, and service proposed must be currently available on the market and in continuing production (no discontinued manufacturers or parts).
 - Assessment of primary and redundant backhaul connection options between local network and the Internet.

- Define the proposed service area and create a conceptual fiber route and high level design to provide the greatest coverage, showing businesses and publicly owned facilities passed within ½ mile on both sides of the fiber route.
- Use algorithmic tools to combine the map data with historical cost data to provide an estimated cost to offer scalable broadband service for all options identified. Costs will be calculated by service area and anticipated route miles to determine capital costs for fiber optic mainline, access equipment, cell tower backhaul, routers, and switches. Costs should be all inclusive of any design, initial configuration and installation costs.

Section C – Partnership options

- Provide examples of who might be a prospective partner with a brief summary of how each relationship would function.
- What sectors, groups and individuals may help our SEC achieve the broadband goals? Please identify synergies and sharing opportunities that exist with providers and customers to include but not limited to:
 - ISP Providers, Telecoms, Cooperatives, Statewide telecom networks, Government entities, NGO's, K-12 and higher education, including library systems, Healthcare providers and the industry and business community

Section D – Financing and Legal Considerations

- Provide financing options to include, but not limited to Federal Infrastructure Grants, public/private partnerships, USDA RUS, other state and federal funding and others where appropriate.
- Provide an assessment of legal requirements, risks and regulations relevant to the building or operation of a network and partnership arrangements.
- Firm will research and present analysis on the need for systems necessary to handle billing and customer service needs and estimates of additional staffing and or

equipment that will be necessary to implement these services, including but not limited to technicians, billing, customer services, trucks, buildings, tools, etc.

- Prepare financial projections:
 - Options Identified
 - Operational Cash flow for expenditures
 - One Time and Recurring Capital Expenses
 - Business and technical expertise needed
 - Organizational support
 - Community Support

PROPOSED SCHEDULE

- All proposals due at 4:30 pm MST on October 22, 2021).
- Project implementation schedule and phasing - Please provide an estimated project timeline. Timeline should include:
 - Estimated project start and end dates.
 - Proposed date(s) for pre-project meeting with SEC's feasibility study project committee.
- Consultant will provide biweekly updates on progress during the work period, via either email, or phone calls, to the designated SEC Representative and/or committee.
- Consultant will provide ten copies of final feasibility study along with a digital copy

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

The following will be considered minimal contents of the proposal. Limit proposal to 10 pages.

1. Provide a restatement of the goals, objectives and project tasks to demonstrate the responder's view of the project and your approach to this project. Please reference the **Study/Report Requirements: Sections A – D** in your responses.
2. Provide on your background and experience in the following areas:

- a. Network: Outline the direct knowledge and experience your company has regarding broadband solutions.
 - b. Financial: Describe direct experience and knowledge your company has creating and analyzing financial plans and models including capital requirements, operational pro-formas, and financing options.
 - c. Regulatory/Legal: Describe any direct experience and knowledge your company has in analyzing and interpreting the regulatory and legal landscape and providing analysis and guidance on these issues as they pertain to the various options contained in the proposal.
 - d. Services: Describe any direct experience and knowledge your company has in providing community and business community analysis and guidance surrounding broadband services.
 - e. Project Management: Outline your company's direct knowledge and experience with structured project management.
 - f. Partnerships: Share your company's experience in working with state and local governments and public-private sector collaborations.
3. Conflicts of Interest: Provide any information on prospective conflicts of interests, including existing or financial relations with equipment vendors, ISPs or other firms.
 4. References: Include at least three references from previous similar projects.

Identify key personnel who will conduct the project and provide detail of their training and work experience. No change in key personnel assigned to the project will be allowed without the approval of the SEC team. Address experience in working with rural communities, schools and reservations in regard to this type of study.

Note: Subcontractors working for the contractor must meet all the requirements of the Request for Proposal (RFP) and any contract between the contractor and the

subcontractor must include all contract terms agreed to between the SEC and the successful contractor.

5. Detailed work plan to include:

- a. Tasks to be accomplished and the budget hours to be expended for each task and subtask. (This will be used as a work plan and managing tool for basis of invoicing.)
- b. Identify project timeline with deliverables and key milestones.
- c. Provide detail regarding local involvement and services expected to complete the project. A minimum of 3 status meetings are to be contained in the work plan in addition to any data collection or input/review meetings.
- d. Outline the project management approach that your company will employ to execute this project and identify individual(s) responsible for the various areas in the outline.
- e. Identify areas of risk for the project based on the contractors detailed work plan and schedule for all aspects of the project including but not limited to financial, construction, legal, product availability, environmental and archaeological.
- f. Provide detailed cost estimate of the study, including known project expenses, professional hourly rates and multipliers and estimated service/task hours with a "Not to Exceed" cap. Other ancillary expenses related to the completion of the study will be discussed on a case-by-case basis.
- g. Commit to working closely with Steering Committee and SEC Board

EVALUATION CRITERIA

The local project team will evaluate all proposals using the following criteria to conduct a best value evaluation:

- Experience and qualifications of the vendor and personnel assigned to this project
- Clear understanding of this project

- Clear technical proficiency for the mix of technologies and cohesiveness of the network proposed
- Project work plan and timeline
- Work experience in small and rural communities including counties, cities and townships
- Pricing

After evaluating all proposals, the local project team may choose to interview the top candidates. After making a selection, the review team will submit their recommendation to the SEC board for final approval to pursue a professional services agreement with the chosen candidate.

SELECTION

Selection of the consultant for this project will be based on the criteria noted above. Upon approval from the board, the SEC will enter into negotiations with the selected consultant to develop a Professional Services Agreement and finalize the work plan including budget hours. Should the SEC and the selected consultant fail to satisfactorily reach agreement to the work plan, including budget, the SEC may enter into negotiations with the respondent judged second in the evaluation process, or the SEC may re-advertise for proposals.

The SEC reserves the right to reject any and all proposals regardless of merit.

RFP TIMELINE

Release RFP	Day 1
Questions due to Socorro Electric Cooperative SEC	Day 21
Socorro Electric Cooperative SEC responses provided	Day 30
Proposals due	Day 44
Interviews, if necessary	Day 60
Approval of contract by SEC board	Day 75

Any proposal related questions should be emailed to jherrera@socorroelectric.com

The above dates are subject to change at the discretion of Socorro Electric Cooperative SEC.

Please email your proposal to (key contact). Generic marketing or advertising materials not specific to your bid should not be included with your proposal.

PRIMARY CONTACTS

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