

**Okanogan County Broadband Action Team (BAT) Planning
Request for Proposal (RFP)**

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1. Overview

Broadband knows no boundaries, capable of connecting communities across physical, political, cultural, and socio-economic and language barriers. Okanogan County and the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation understand the impacts broadband can have across their shared communities. With this understanding, entities within the County and the Tribes have made substantial investments into the broadband planning, services, and infrastructure necessary to bridge the digital divide separating rural north central Washington from the benefits of a robust and resilient broadband network. Yet, barriers persists as communities struggle to create places with 21st century livability factors; living wage jobs, resilient businesses, highest quality healthcare and emergency management systems, highest quality education outcomes, economic and cultural diversity, and emergent markets supportive of the creative class. Simply, the 5,315 square mile region that is Okanogan County and the associated portion of the Colville Reservation is too vast to adequately implement and monitor these livability factors of community and economic development without the assistance of a strategic broadband plan.

Attempting to meet the broadband needs of the 41,742 residents through deployment without a professional planning process guiding efforts has resulted in fragmented and piecemeal approach to address a county and tribal wide problem. For this reason, the County and Tribes have created the Okanogan County and Colville Tribes Broadband Action Team. The development of a Plan will assist in establishing a collective county wide and tribal vision for broadband, inventorying existing assets and conditions, prioritizing areas of deficiencies, identifying emerging opportunities and mitigating threats to the treasured assets associated with the rural character and culture of the region.

The BAT has identified a vision of providing critical infrastructure that results in the creation of communities of choice, providing the services capable of retaining talent, recruiting the highest quality workforce, and proving resilient in the face of adversity and natural disaster. This vision provides the opportunity to submit this application to the Community Economic Revitalization Board for support of the development of a County and Tribal Broadband Strategic Plan.

2. Background

Much of Okanogan County, including the Colville Reservation within Okanogan County, is plagued with high unemployment, excessive poverty, and an absence of quality of life amenities that have proven to be undesirable to most residents and insurmountable barriers to 21st century economic and community development. Okanogan County and the Colville Confederated Tribes are historically and economically a distressed area. Historically, the surrounding areas within Okanogan County have been dependent on a resource-based economy. Community and economic resources have decreased dramatically as a

substantial as the Omak Mill, closed. Many individuals have struggled to find work elsewhere and have either had to move, find government work, or start their own business.

Simply put, this area lacks reliable, widespread broadband access necessary to overcome these challenges. Broadband will help bolster both a dormant and burgeoning economy within Okanogan County and on the Colville Indian Reservation. Better broadband will help to support both tribal and county relations with local community and economic development, as well as the potential for more robust communication tools like precision agriculture, telemedicine, virtual classrooms, videoconferencing, VoIP, big data or block chain opportunities, etc. In addition, it will also help with existing business retention efforts and other economic development strategies that should subsequently support and/or help to provide new employment opportunities and increased distance learning options for K-12 and higher education for local students, which in turn should help improve the homework efficiency gap and competitive academic divide. It will provide improvements to public safety communications systems needed by local EMRs and residents and ultimately improve the landscape for building and community resilience.

The short-term benefits will include national media attention, improved federal/state political support, additional local stakeholder buy in, more community awareness, establishment of public/private partnerships, and through the BAT we have generated regional awareness of Okanogan County community and economic development. Another short-term benefit is community progress with local and regional economic development strategies that will help to enhance the quality of life for all area residents, including the elderly, young adults, and other local youth in the community. The long-term benefits of improving broadband access in Okanogan County will lead to better articulated economic development plans, equal access to broadband for youth and elderly, improved access to cell phone coverage or Wi-Fi, increased awareness of broadband opportunities, robust home-based and/or rural small businesses and other cottage industries, improved access to Town Hall or county meetings through live streaming, and increased business development and retention or recruitment campaigns.

Ideally, planning and analysis will unify the community as key stakeholders to economic vitality and success. The planning process values stakeholder input, lending to community involvement and ownership of broadband deployment efforts. To achieve sustainability in economically distressed areas such as Okanogan County and the Colville Reservation, stakeholder input facilitated through the planning process is required and will reflect our shared values of respect for our natural environment, yet balanced with the built environment, and bolstering the economic opportunity each community member and stakeholder is afforded as their birth right. As a broadband desert, seeing this project to completion will be monumental in bringing the economic benefits associated with broadband to the community. Economic stability is the ultimate goal in bringing better access to broadband to the community.

3. Purpose

The Okanogan County and Colville Confederated Tribes BAT accomplished a successful launch in 2019 and has continued to meet monthly to continue its work on promoting local broadband access and identifying current gaps. As a result of its continued collaboration with the Colville Confederated Tribes staff and the County commissioners, Okanogan County now has the potential to become a state leader in local economic growth, community revitalization and stability.

The aim of this effort is to expand our local capacity to provide and promote community revitalization and economic development opportunities for both residents and area businesses as a means to improving local business recruitment and retention efforts and attracting the much-needed talent that many of our major employers need. This vital element will be accomplished through broadband and as a direct result of this effort, better economic stability and local job growth will rise within and around the county and with the tribes. Our vision is to increase the accessibility, reliability and quality of broadband in unserved or underserved communities within Okanogan County and the Colville Indian Reservation. This lack of access has impacts on education, economic growth and viability, emergency services and quality of life.

4. Anticipated Scope of Work

This project is value driven, and through its collaboration with all of its stakeholders, broadband will have a cost-benefit to the following: anchor institutions, rural small businesses, schools and libraries, county and tribal departments, as well as other county and tribal satellite locations. In other words, the planning scope of the work will identify the needs, challenges, and opportunities for common County and Colville Tribal Departments like IT, Emergency Management Services (EMS), Public Works, Planning Department, public hospitals, Sheriff's Department, and various local schools and districts which demonstrate a significant need for, and/or improvement of, local broadband access. Broadband will highly benefit these collaborators and stakeholders because it lends to equal access of broadband in a way that supports the community and stabilizes the economy. Overall, this collaboration across both political and geographic boundaries with Tribes, institutions, agencies, departments, businesses, individual departments and individuals will improve both data collection and data analysis, which are extremely vital to broadband connectivity and planning in Okanogan County.

So, in collaboration with the Colville Tribes, Okanogan County will continue to leverage the BAT in order to achieve better planning success that leads to both implementation and construction projects. There is dire need for broadband in Okanogan County. As a result, there are several key community stakeholders and other national enterprises that participate in the Okanogan County BAT with a vested interest in the County's public network (including its infrastructure), including the Colville Confederated Tribes, NCI Data, Community Net, Okanogan PUD, and the North Star Opportunity Zone (OZ).

5. Duration

Estimated Schedule for Public Project Completion Task Date (Month/Year)

<u>Task</u>	<u>Date</u>
Consultant Service Chosen	11/30/2019
Consultant Begin Work	01/03/2020
Consultant Draft Report	03/01/2020
60% Project Completion Report	05/01/2020
80% Project Completion Report	06/01/2020
Consultant Draft Report	07/01/2020
Consultant Final Report	09/01/2020
Consultant End Work	10/31/2020
Project Complete	12/31/2020

6. Requirements and Deliverables from Consultant

The Okanogan County and Colville Confederated Tribes BAT has identified several consulting needs that are summarized below. The successful consultant and the BAT will further refine the scope of work and schedule during the contract negotiation process.

1. Stakeholder identification, formation and engagement.
 - a. Preliminary meetings to inform stakeholders of project
 - b. Development of broadband planning group(s), providing an accurate cross section of demographics, communities, enterprises, chambers, education institutions, ISPs, etc.
2. Identify the Problems
 - a. Gather input about broadband needs
 - b. Identify gaps in existing assets
 - c. Gather information for existing infrastructure (wireless, fiber, microwave, etc.)
 - d. Design, distribute and analyze market assessment survey to determine current broadband access, use, needs, and interest in expanded service.
 - e. Host community forums/town halls to discuss market survey findings and seek additional public input
3. Set Preliminary Goals and Establish Key Performance Indicators
 - a. Identify and meet with community stakeholders to identify long term goals relating to broadband
 - b. Okanogan Co PUD, Colville Tribal IT, County and Tribal Programs
 - c. Utilize Colville Tribal efforts as BAT partners in Okanogan Co and Ferry Co to inform and coordinate a regional broadband effort
 - d. Business stakeholder meetings including at least tourism, agriculture, EMS, Okanogan Co TV District, and telecommunications providers
 - e. Utilization of a facilitation method capable of identifying and capitalization of existing regional and local strengths; mitigation of and strategies for overcoming regional and local points of weakness; facilitates the identification of emergent and horizon solutions, strategies, and attitudes toward external opportunities; and the identification of strategies capable of mitigating threats to broadband effectiveness and deployment.
4. Inventory Data and Conditions
 - a. Complete broadband map (public and private) and asset inventory
 - b. Complete community inventory of barriers, institutional assets and interests
 - c. Identify Internet Service Providers (ISPs), current and planned levels of service
5. Analyze Data and Conditions
 - a. Conduct broadband gap analysis based on inventory of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats
 - b. Determine strategic redundancy methodologies supporting community and economic resilience.
 - c. Determine last mile, middle mile, and backbone needs based on stakeholder input for desired level of service
 - d. Include assessment of existing applicable tribal, federal and other codes and regulations that impact or influence broadband infrastructure development and deployment
6. Identify Alternatives and Deployment Solutions
 - a. Microsoft Airband Initiative feasibility considerations, FTTX (FTTP, FTTH, FTTB, etc.), among other not yet identified alternatives that may prove most suitable to the region.
 - b. Identify Business Plan alternatives to: network design, network design costs, cost estimates, operating models, and business models (private, public private partnerships, etc.)

- c. Identify strategies for broadband implementation across the region
 - i. Study the potential for Open Access Networks
- d. Evaluate existing and potential locations supportive of
 - i. the expansion of EMS communications network;
 - ii. expansion of wireless internet solutions;
 - iii. expansion of broadband dependent cellular services;
 - iv. the expansion of broadband supported or dependent over-the-air television
- 7. Select Alternatives or a Combination of Alternatives
 - a. Utilizing cost/benefit analysis for strategic implementation and efficient utilization of resources
 - b. Identify and offer best practices for selection of alternatives for implementation
- 8. Evaluate the Implementation of Alternatives and offer implementation strategies
 - a. Identify Performance Metrics as determined by global industry leaders in the areas of rural broadband solutions
 - b. Inform regional partners of regional, national, and global strategies to gain distinct advantages supportive of local economic and community development goals

7. Proposal Process and Submission of Qualifications

Please provide the following information in an organized fashion in the order listed. Failure to provide enough information may lead to the Okanogan County and Colville Confederated Tribes BAT determination that the consultant's qualifications are not responsive to this Request for Qualifications (RFQ).

Letter of Interest and Introduction

Please describe your interest in the anticipated scope of work.

Qualifications and Prior Performance

Provide information, including references, on two to three other similar projects the firm has been involved in the last 3-5 years that are considered to be similar to the anticipated scope of work. Provide a sample of a prior study as Appendix A.

Project Management

Identify the project manager and any additional sub-consultants to be used on the project. Provide a summary of qualifications and experience for the project manager and other consultants including work on similar studies. Identify to what extent travel expenses could affect the project cost. Describe the project management approach to be used, including how costs will be managed and controlled.

Proposed Staff

List the experience and number of years with the firm for the key members of the staff proposed. Also include the experience of any proposed sub-consultant staff. Local experience and prior experience with Ferry County BAT and/or rural communities is considered desirable. Resumes may be included as Appendix B.

Staff Availability

Demonstrate your ability to provide the proposed staff for the studies and the ability to perform the anticipated scope of work in a timely manner. Indicate your anticipated schedule following the receipt of the Notice to Proceed, including total duration of the project to completion.

Demonstrate Your Understanding of the Ferry County BAT’s Needs

List and briefly describe what you think are important issues and what your approach would be for successful completion of the anticipated scope of work. Include a discussion of schedule and milestones that may impact the timely completion of the studies.

Proposed Contract and Agreement

The Ferry County BAT has included a proposed Contract for Professional Services and a Non-Disclosure Agreement in this RFQ. The consultant shall indicate if it is willing to execute the Ferry County BAT’s proposed Contract and Agreement with or without exceptions.

Qualifications Submission Format and Deadline

The consultant’s qualifications shall be submitted as a single PDF document, not to exceed 40 letter sized pages. Graphics shall be kept to a minimum. Appendices for references and resumes will not be counted in the page totals. Send qualifications (via email) to:

Qualifications submitted by other means will not be accepted. Qualifications submitted after the deadline date and time will not be accepted.

8. Milestones and Schedule

<u>Milestones</u>	<u>Completion</u>
RFQ Advertisement	10/25/2019
RFQ Response due	11/26/2019
Short List Consultant Interviews	12/06/2019
Scope of Work Negotiations	12/12/2019
Submit contract to Ferry County BAT for review	12/17/2019
Submit contract to BOCC for approval	12/23/2019
Consultant Notice to Proceed	12/31/2019
Final Strategic Plan Report	10/31/2020
Present Strategic Plan Report to FC BAT	11/24/2020
Present Strategic Plan Report to BOCC	11/30/2020

9. Evaluation Criteria - Review and Selection Process

Consultant selection will be based on the evaluation of qualifications unless it is deemed necessary by the Okanogan County and Colville Confederated Tribes BAT to conduct interviews of closely scored consultants. The consultants determined best qualified to perform the studies will be recommended to the Okanogan County BOCC for acceptance, subject to successful negotiation of a contract for professional services.

A select group of the BAT members and other stakeholders will review all submitted qualifications. The review team will recommend finalists for interviews and those finalists will be notified via email. The review team will interview finalists between December 2nd and 5th and select the final consultant on Dec. 6th. Qualifications submitted will be ranked based upon the merits of the written qualifications and experience of the firm or consultant team. Each reviewer will award a score based on 25 point total as follows:

- a. Demonstrated understanding of the needs of the Okanogan County BAT and its proposed Scope of Work. (5)
- b. Qualifications of the project team (5)
- c. Experience working with rural communities and/or small to medium sized public utility companies. (5)
- d. Degree to which the project design approaches goals with innovative and creative solutions or methods. (5)
- e. Likelihood that the chosen proposal will provide the best value in comparison to other submitted proposals. (5)

10. Contract Award and MOU w/Consultant

The Okanogan County BAT reserves and has the sole discretion to:

- a. Award a contract for professional services for all, any, or any combination of the anticipated scope of work described within the RFQ.
- b. Reject any and all consultant qualifications considered by the Okanogan County and Colville Confederated Tribes BAT to be non-responsive or not in the best interest of the BAT.
- c. Supplement, amend or otherwise modify this RFQ or cancel this RFQ without substitution.
- d. Waive any or all informalities in the consultant's qualifications or failures to comply with the RFQ requirements.
- e. Request further information, or presentations from consultants as needed to support the Okanogan County and Colville Confederated Tribes BAT selection of the most qualified consultant.
- f. Select any consultant that in the opinion of the Okanogan County and Colville Confederated Tribes BAT is most qualified.
- g. Modify the anticipated scope of work, and milestones and schedule.
- h. Award the contract for professional services with no additional discussions.

Should you have any questions or wish to request any additional information, please contact:

Roni Holder-Diefenbach, Executive Director
Economic Alliance
509-826-5107
509-322-4634 cell
rholderdiefenbach@economic-alliance.com