



Sublette County

Towns of Pinedale, Big Piney, and Marbleton

Wyoming

Request for Proposals

for

Public-Private Partnership to Lease Broadband
Infrastructure and Provide Broadband Services

October 5, 2018

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1. Introduction

Sublette County (the County) and the towns of Big Piney, Marbleton, and Pinedale (the Towns), Wyoming, have worked collaboratively to address the availability of broadband in the County. Together, the County and Towns have identified a lack of robust broadband infrastructure as a major hurdle to economic development in the County, particularly in the business areas of the County's population centers—including, but not limited to, the Towns, and the community centers in Daniel and Boulder. To address this need, the County and the Towns (hereinafter, collectively referred to as "Consortium") intend to install conduit and fiber infrastructure to enable high-quality service to businesses in the key business areas of the Towns, and to facilitate private sector investment to the residential areas of the Towns and the entire County.

The goal of this effort is to enable the private broadband market to expand and thrive in Sublette County. The Consortium intends that this initiative will support and accelerate private providers' efforts to improve broadband service options and to build strong broadband businesses in the community. Though the Consortium is committed to building the infrastructure necessary to add networking capacity and route diversity to the area, **the Consortium does not seek to provide retail broadband service to customers.** Rather, the Consortium intends to lease the publicly owned fiber to one or more partner ISPs in exchange for a commitment to provide service.

Background

In March 2017, the County hired an independent consultant to prepare a strategic broadband plan. The consultant found severe limitations with existing communications infrastructure and recommended that the County construct conduit or fiber infrastructure between all the Towns and population centers, as well as to interconnection points with carriers to the northwest and the south of the County. A map of the proposed routes is included in Section 3. The entirety of the report is included as Appendix A.

In May 2018, the County released a [Request for Information](#) (RFI) seeking ideas from potential private collaborators regarding the deployment of broadband infrastructure in the County. The County received six qualified responses that informed its approach to this Request for Proposals (RFP).

Funding Sources

The Consortium is in the process of applying for federal and state grants to support this effort. The Consortium anticipates knowing the outcome of these grant applications in early 2019. Both the Towns and County have appropriated adequate funds to supplement grant awards for network construction costs. Provided these grants are awarded, the County Commission and

Town Councils will determine if they will move forward with deployment, based on the results of this competitive process.

Potential Business Relationship with Private Partner

Through this RFP, the Consortium seeks to identify one or more qualified private entities (Partner) to lease, operate, and possibly maintain the Consortium's conduit and fiber assets in exchange for a commitment to provide the businesses passed by the fiber with broadband internet service at comparable prices to nearby metropolitan markets.

The Consortium intends to develop a public-private partnership with one or more respondents that will ensure that businesses passed by the new fiber assets have the connectivity needed to compete in the 21st century economy. The Consortium will leverage their ability to apply for grants, and appropriate local funds if necessary, to cover the capital costs associated with fiber deployment. Once completed, the Consortium will lease the fiber to their private partner, through a 20-year Indefeasible Rights of Use (IRU), with potential for a renewal for another 20 years. The Consortium seeks a firm commitment from a Partner to provide service to every business passing at a regionally competitive price.

Governance

The County is working with the Towns to create a unified governance structure to oversee the public infrastructure, to formalize the existing, informal working arrangements of the Consortium. The County and Towns intend that there will be a single point of contact within this entity with whom the Partner will negotiate, work, and communicate.

Structure of this RFP

The sections below present a description of the goals of this procurement (Section 2) and the planned fiber route (Section 3). Section 4 describes funding sources the Consortium plans to use to deploy assets. Section 5 outlines the evaluation criteria and the weighting for each that the Consortium will consider in its partner selection process. Section 6 details response format requirements. The last two sections provide important dates and details related to the response and evaluation process.

Responses to this RFP are not intended to create a contractual relationship, or any type of contractual obligation or responsibility, between the applicant and Sublette County or the Consortium. Furthermore, Sublette County and the Consortium reserve the right to reject any and all responses to the RFP for any reason.

2. Goals of this Procurement

Through this RFP, the Consortium seeks a qualified private Partner to whom the Consortium will lease conduit or dark fiber connecting the Towns and community centers to connection points at the County boundary and passing all businesses in the three Towns. **The Consortium seeks a partner that will commit to make high-capacity, enterprise-grade and business-class data services available to businesses in the Towns and population centers at a competitive price, and that will further invest to extend services to residences in the Towns and to other areas of the County.** The Consortium wants the availability of broadband to be an asset, rather than a liability, in its economic development efforts. It intends to use the availability of next-generation broadband services to help attract and retain businesses.

The Consortium welcomes responses from incumbent internet service providers, competitive providers, non-profit institutions, cooperatives, and any other entity that is qualified and interested in such an opportunity.

Technical Goals: The Consortium seeks bids from potential Partner(s) with the technical expertise and capacity to meet the functional requirements of the project: to make enterprise-grade broadband services available to all the business that the fiber passes. The Consortium welcomes discussion of the technical specifications necessary for these goals to be met and has intentionally released this RFP before determining the specifications of the assets to allow for potential Partner input.

Financial Goals: The Consortium seeks bids from potential Partner(s) who are willing and financially able to take on the operational risks associated with leasing fiber and offering broadband service. The Consortium expects some financial remuneration for access to public infrastructure and may provide access at below-market rates in exchange for a firm commitment to serve all business passings at a regionally competitive price. Because the Partner(s) will benefit from the grants and public funds that will cover the capital cost of the network infrastructure, they must also be willing to commit their own resources to the project and assume the financial risk associated with ongoing operations.

Service Goals: The Consortium seeks bids from potential Partner(s) who will offer enterprise-grade and business-class broadband services to all the business that the public fiber will pass. The Consortium wants businesses in Sublette County to be able to access the same tiers of service as businesses have in nearby metropolitan areas, such as Idaho Falls, Idaho, and Jackson and Casper Wyoming, at a comparable price.

In addition to these primary goals, the Consortium has two secondary goals for its broadband initiative that will also factor into the Consortium's evaluation of RFP responses:

1. **Improve service options for Town and County residences.** While the Consortium is primarily focused on improving service options for businesses, it hopes that the proposed infrastructure will eventually be used to improve service options for residences, both in the population centers and in the more remote regions of the County.
2. **Ensure adequate dedicated services for the County's Fire and Sheriff departments.** The Consortium seeks dedicated, reliable capacity for the Fire and Sheriff departments to ensure adequate emergency services in the long term.

3. Planned Conduit or Fiber Route

The Consortium has identified two potential components for its proposed communications infrastructure efforts: conduit or fiber in conduit.

The proposed fiber or conduit network would be built along US 189 from LaBarge to Daniel Junction, and/or up from Rock Springs. At Daniel Junction this build would be bifurcated, and would:

- Extend north along US 189/191, first to Bondurant and then on to the County line. At that point, a partner could extend fiber to Hoback Junction, where connectivity could be completed with several regional and national carriers. This would allow diverse and/or redundant access to major internet and telephone service hub locations.
- Extend south along US 191 into Pinedale, where a countywide aggregation and control point could be built. From Pinedale, the network could be extended south along US 191 past the airport, Barger, and Boulder—and then to the Sand Draw area near the junction of 191 and 351. The route would also be extended further south on US 191 to the Erramouspe Road area to allow the extension of services via wireless technology to nearby gas fields to the south.

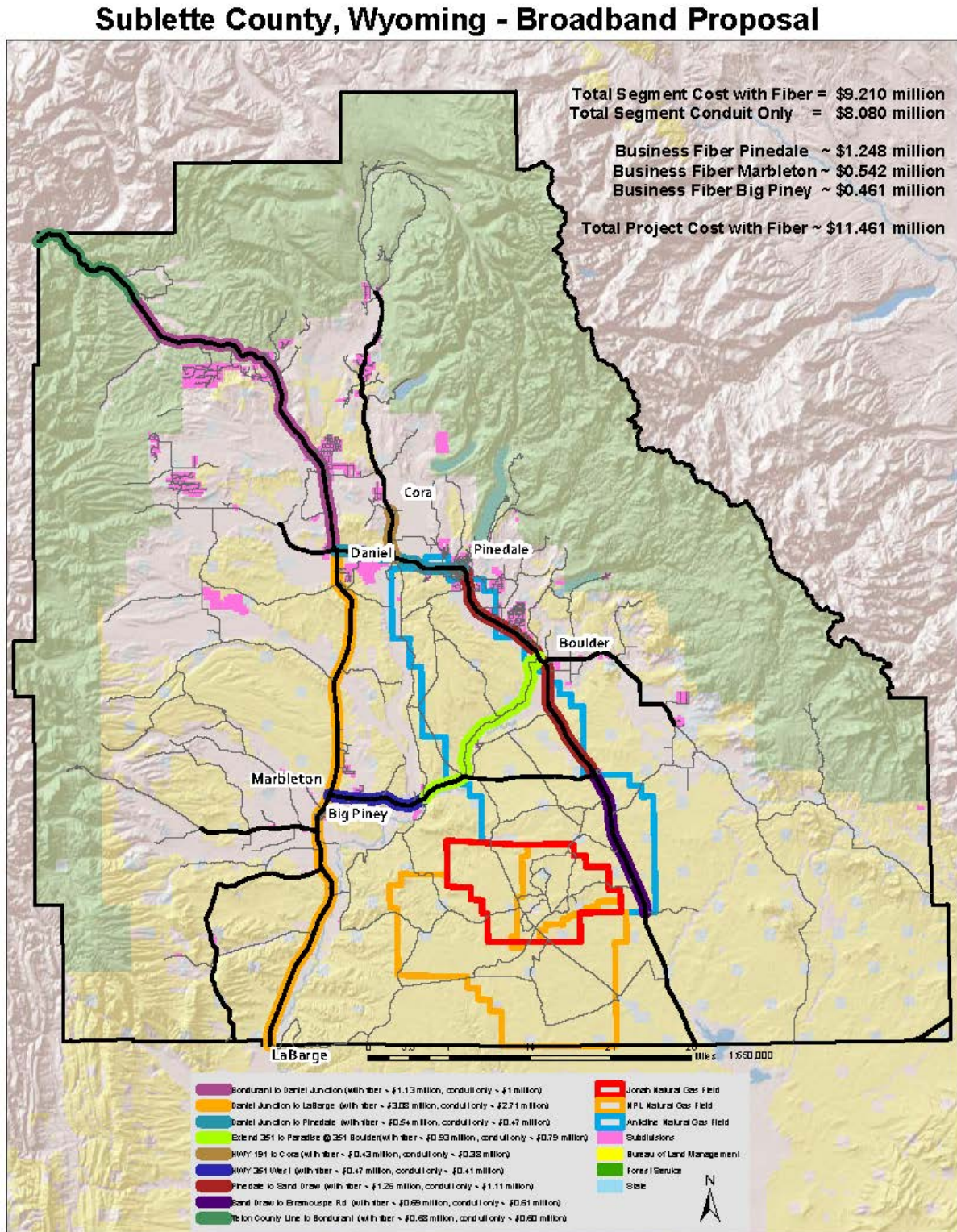
The Consortium could also build a route from US 189 along 351 to Paradise Road (CR 136), and along Paradise Road northerly to provide better access for Sublette County natural gas fields. This extension would complete a ring in the center of the County, facilitating increased reliability.

The fiber or conduit will be designed with a great frequency of connection opportunities to maximize efficiency and flexibility for additional middle- and last-mile connections.

These routes and the County's consultant's cost estimates for construction are summarized in Figure 1, below. The entirety of the County's consultant's report is attached to this RFP as Appendix A.

The routes proposed in this RFP are the Consortium's first cut at what it believes are the most useful routes. However, the Consortium welcomes responses that propose routes that the respondent believes will be optimal, including the respondent's preferred path into the County (i.e., via Jackson, Rock Springs, LaBarge, etc.). The Consortium anticipates that final routes will be negotiated after selecting a viable Partner.

Figure 1: Proposed Fiber and Conduit Routes in the County



The Consortium anticipates that last-mile infrastructure (i.e., conduit or fiber) will pass all the businesses in Big Piney, Pinedale, and Marbleton. Proposed routes in the Towns are included in Figure 2, Figure 3, and Figure 4, below.

Figure 2: Proposed Routes in Big Piney (Fiber Routes in Red)



Figure 3: Proposed Routes in Marbleton (Fiber Routes in Purple)

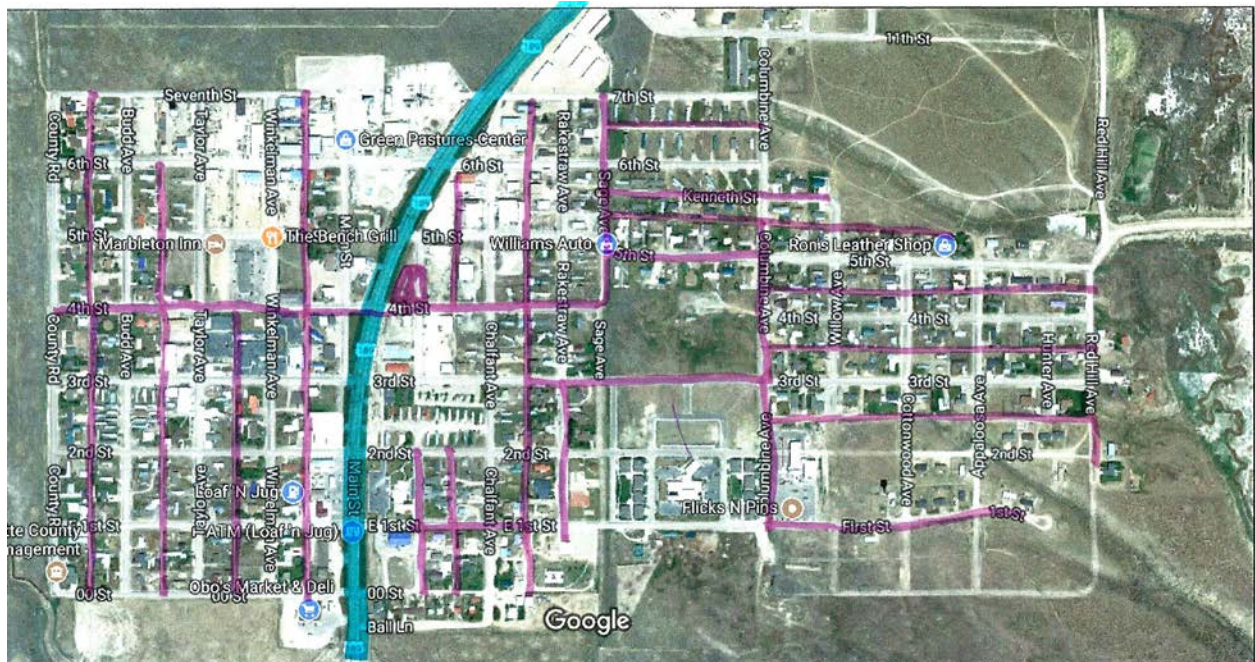
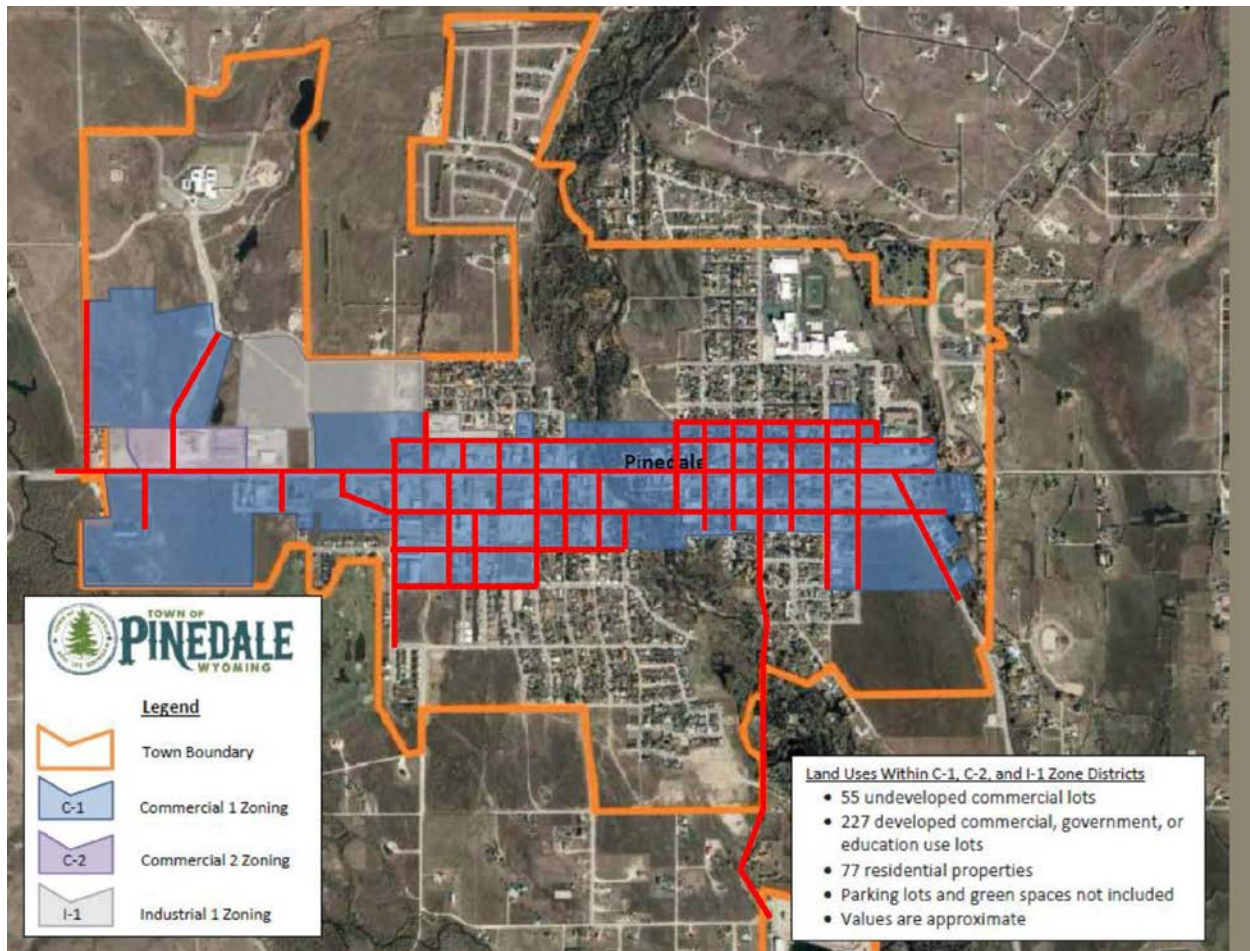


Figure 4: Proposed Routes in Pinedale (Fiber Routes in Red)



We note that in addition to the locations shown in these maps, the Consortium has prioritized connections to the community centers in Daniel and Boulder, as well as to the school complexes in Big Piney and Pinedale.

4. Funding Sources

The Consortium is in the process of applying for grants through both the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), and the Wyoming Business Council Business Ready Grant programs, and anticipates knowing the outcome of these grant applications in early 2019. Additionally, the Towns and the County have allocated funds to supplement grant awards for network construction costs. Provided these grants are awarded, the County Commission and Town Councils will determine if they will move forward with deployment, based on the results of this competitive process.

5. Selection Criteria

The Consortium will evaluate bids based on the following general criteria:

1. Proposed service levels for business passings,
2. Consumer pricing, including installation fee (if any),
3. Proposed dark fiber lease rate,
4. Technical capabilities and respondent’s track record, including management team capabilities and past performance,
5. Financial viability of respondent,
6. Affirmation of willingness to take responsibility for fiber maintenance,
7. Impact of proposed partnership on first responders,
8. Impact of proposed partnership on residential broadband service options, and
9. Privacy policy and commitment to protect consumer data

The Consortium will evaluate all responses to this RFP based upon these criteria, weighted as follows:

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Evaluation weight</i>
1. Proposed services and pricing to be offered to businesses	20 percent
2. Impact of proposed partnership on residential broadband service options	20 percent
3. Proposed conduit or dark fiber lease rate, based on 20-year IRU with potential 20-year extension on mutual agreement (other proposals will be considered)	15 percent
4. Technical capabilities and track record of respondent	10 percent
5. Financial viability of respondent	10 percent
6. Commitment to, and terms for, fiber maintenance	10 percent
7. Impact of proposed partnership on public safety and first responders	10 percent
8. Commitment to protect consumer privacy policy	5 percent

6. RFP Response Format

The Consortium requests the following information, in as much detail as is practicable. Please adhere to the page limitations listed below, and provide your electronic response in either Microsoft Word or Adobe PDF format, using the following response structure.

Please identify any proprietary and/or confidential information contained in your response. In the event of a Wyoming Public Records Act request, information marked proprietary or confidential will be redacted from your response before its disclosure.

1. Commitment

Please affirm that you are interested in this partnership and will meet the requirements contained in this RFP if selected as the Consortium's Partner.

Please keep your response to no more than one (1) page.

2. Desired Technical Specifications of Assets

The Consortium has intentionally released this RFP before determining the technical specifications of the conduit or fiber it will deploy. Please describe your desired technical specifications of these assets (e.g., conduit size, distribution of pull boxes, etc.).

Please keep your response to no more than two (2) pages.

3. Service Offering Proposal

Please describe the services you would offer to businesses if selected as a Partner. Include information about what speeds you expect to be able to offer, and, to the extent possible, information about your pricing strategy. State whether you would be willing to commit to maintaining prices comparable to prices in nearby metropolitan markets.

Please keep your response to no more than two (2) pages.

4. Conduit or Dark Fiber Lease Structure and Rate Proposal

Please indicate your preference that the County deploy conduit or fiber and discuss whether you would prefer to lease this asset on a per-month basis, or in a long-term IRU. According to your preferred lease structure, state the maximum rate you would be willing to pay per linear foot of conduit or per strand per mile for one dozen, two dozen, three dozen, four dozen, five dozen, and six dozen strands of fiber. Please note that the Consortium prefers the stability of a 20-year IRU with potential 20-year extension on mutual agreement, but we welcome alternative proposals.

Please keep your response to no more than three (3) pages.

5. Partner Technical Viability and Experience

The Consortium seeks a Partner with the technical capacity and experience to meet the needs described in this RFP. This section is intended to explain how your firm is a suitable partner for

this project. Please provide a statement of experience discussing past performance, capabilities, and qualifications. Among other things, please address the following:

1. Identify other markets where your firm operates networks; include enterprise-grade and business-class service descriptions and pricing information from other markets in which you operate. If you already operate network infrastructure in Sublette or nearby counties, please describe your existing networking assets in the region.
2. Discuss partnerships with other service providers, government, or non-profit entities you have undertaken, particularly any in which you provide broadband services to businesses in rural towns and population centers.
3. Discuss your capabilities regarding operation and maintenance of fiber networks.
4. Provide example(s) of existing CRM system(s) that demonstrate your ability to deliver quality customer service.
5. Provide an example of a web customer interface you have provided in a business deployment.

Please keep your response to no more than three (3) pages.

6. Partner Financial Viability and Experience

The Consortium seeks bids from potential Partners with the financial capacity to meet the needs described in this RFP. Please provide an explanation and data to demonstrate your financial capacity and capability to provide broadband service to businesses for the lifetime of the proposed partnership. Suggested documents include audited financial statements, bank statements, or SEC filings.

Please keep your response to no more than two (2) pages. You may attach additional financial statements as an appendix to your response.

7. Partner Management Team Viability and Experience

The Consortium seeks bids from potential Partners that will assign an experienced and able management team to operate, and potentially maintain, the proposed network. Please identify the team members you propose for this project and describe their experience and capabilities.

Please keep your response to no more than one (1) page.

8. Conduit or Fiber Maintenance Plan Proposal

Please include a statement that you intend to assume responsibility for maintenance of the conduit or fiber and discuss the minimum service requirements your maintenance plan will support.

Please keep your response to no more than two (2) pages.

9. Timeline

Please provide your proposed schedule for initiation of service after fiber buildout is complete, including a timeline with key milestones.

Please keep your response to no more than one (1) page.

10. Commitment to First Responders

As part of this fiber buildout, the Consortium wants to be sure that first responders have the dedicated services they need for generations to come. The Consortium anticipates that first responders will seek commercial service over public safety-grade infrastructure from a Partner at an agreed-upon rate. Discuss how your proposed solution will make sure first responders have the dedicated services they need.

Please keep your response to no more than one (1) page.

11. Impact on Residential Service Offerings

If you expect to provide services to residential passings, please describe the services you plan to offer. Discuss any additional infrastructure deployments you are considering in the County. Please also describe the desired conditions of partnership (e.g., do you seek an exclusive agreement with the Consortium for a specific period of time, can the Consortium lease additional strands to other ISPs or mobile service providers focused on serving the residential market, etc.)

Please keep your response to no more than two (2) pages.

12. Privacy

Please describe your commitment to securing consumer privacy and your customer data collection policy.

Please keep your response to no more than one (1) page.

13. References

Please provide three references for your company, including contact information, from previous contracts or partnerships. References from past successful public-private partnership efforts are particularly welcome.

Please keep your response to no more than one (1) page.

Responses to this RFP are not intended to create a contractual relationship, or any type of contractual obligation or responsibility, between the applicant and Sublette County or the

Consortium. Furthermore, Sublette County and the Consortium reserve the right to reject any and all responses to the RFP for any reason.

7. Response Process

We ask that all respondents provide all requested material and submit their response in the format (structure and page limitations) specified in this RFP.

Respondents should submit their responses NO LATER THAN 4:00 PM MST on November 9 by email to BOTH Tom.Noble@sublettewyo.com and Mary.Lankford@sublettewyo.com.

All correspondence regarding this RFP should be directed to BOTH Tom.Noble@sublettewyo.com and Mary.Lankford@sublettewyo.com.

Interest in Questions and Answers

All respondents who are interested in receiving a copy of RFP questions and answers are asked to submit a valid email address via email by 4:00 PM MDT on October 12, 2018, to **BOTH Tom.Noble@sublettewyo.com and Mary.Lankford@sublettewyo.com.**

Questions

Questions related to this RFP should be emailed to **BOTH Tom.Noble@sublettewyo.com and Mary.Lankford@sublettewyo.com** no later than 4:00 PM MDT on October 19, 2018.

Responses to Questions

We will email a list of questions received and our responses to these questions no later than 4:00 PM MDT on October 26, 2018, to all respondents that have submitted questions or that have requested the responses.

Response Deadline

Final RFP submissions should be submitted by email no later than 4:00 PM MST on November 9, 2018 to **BOTH Tom.Noble@sublettewyo.com and Mary.Lankford@sublettewyo.com.**

Please identify any proprietary and/or confidential information contained in your response. In the event of a Wyoming Public Records Act request, information marked proprietary or confidential will be redacted from your response before its disclosure.

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Summary of RFP Process Deadlines

The following is the schedule for responding to this RFP. The schedule is subject to change.

- **October 5, 2018** – RFP released
- **October 12, 2018** – Deadline for submitting request for RFP questions and answers
- **October 19, 2018** – Deadline for submitting questions
- **October 26, 2018** – Consortium emails RFP questions and answers to respondents that have requested them
- **November 9, 2018** – RFP responses due

The Consortium thanks you in advance for your thoughtful response.

8. Respondent Presentations

At its discretion, the Consortium may request any party that provides a compliant response to this RFP to make an individual and personal presentation to better explain information or solutions identified in the response. These presentations, if requested by the Consortium, shall be held at a time and place of mutual convenience.

Appendix A: Independent Consultant Strategic Broadband Plan