



Perry County
PENNSYLVANIA

**REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS:
BROADBAND EXPANSION AND DEPLOYMENT**

ISSUED: April 19, 2023

CONTACT: Brenda Watson, County
Commissioner



REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS: BROADBAND EXPANSION AND DEPLOYMENT

I. REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS

- A. Request for qualifications.** The County of Perry, Pennsylvania (hereinafter the “County”), is requesting Statements of Qualifications (“SOQs”) from interested firms for the provision of high-speed broadband Internet services in the County. The County is requesting SOQs from capable wireline Internet Service Providers (“ISPs”), Wireless Internet Service Providers (“WISPs”) and other firms capable of providing high-speed broadband Internet service at the service levels and to the geographic areas detailed herein. The purpose of this RFQ is to identify firms with whom the County may collaborate to expand high-speed broadband Internet service availability to all County residents. This document is not a formal Request for Proposals, nor should it be treated as such by applicants.
- B. Timeline for submission; Selection.** This RFQ is issued as of Wednesday, April 19, 2023. The County must receive all SOQs submitted in response to this RFQ either in hard copy or electronically within sixty (60) days of the issuance of this RFQ, or by 11:59PM on June 18, 2023. A final decision regarding selected applicants will be made no more than ninety (90) days following the end of the submission period, or by 11:59PM on September 16, 2023. Proposals received after 11:59PM on June 18, 2023 will be returned unopened. No exceptions will be made.
- C. Address for submission.** All SOQs that are submitted in hard copy must be submitted to the following address:

County of Perry
25 West Main Street
PO Box 37
New Bloomfield, PA 17068
Attn: Brenda Watson, County Commissioner
c/o Shannon Hines, Chief Clerk

With copies to:

Michael D. Roberts
Cohen Law Group
413 South Main Street
Third Floor
Pittsburgh, PA 15215

SOQs that are submitted electronically must be submitted to County Commissioner Brenda Watson at bwatson@perryco.org and Michael D. Roberts at mroberts@cohenlawgroup.org.

- D. Questions.** Please direct any questions regarding this RFQ in writing to County Commissioner Brenda Watson at bwatson@perryco.org and Michael D. Roberts at mroberts@cohenlawgroup.org. All questions must be received at least fourteen (14) days before the due date for SOQs. All questions and County answers will be shared with all known applicants.
- E. Revisions.** Any SOQ submitted in response to this RFQ may be revised by the applicant by submitting an updated SOQ to the address noted above prior to the deadline for submission. The revised SOQ must be complete and all information contained in previously submitted SOQs will be disregarded upon submission of a revised SOQ.
- F. Withdrawal.** Any SOQ submitted under this RFQ may be withdrawn at any time by notifying County Commissioner Brenda Watson at bwatson@perryco.org and Michael D. Roberts at mroberts@cohenlawgroup.org.
- G. Extension; Postponement.** The County reserves the right to extend or postpone the date and time for accepting or issuing a decision on SOQs. Notice of such extension or postponement shall be included as an addendum to this RFQ and shall be provided to all applicants from whom SOQs have been received as of the time of the extension or postponement.
- H. Additional Information.** The County reserves the right to request any additional information necessary to confirm that the applicant's qualifications, business organization, and financial resources are sufficient to be selected as a potential partner. Requests for additional information will be made in writing to the applicant from whom such additional information is being requested.
- I. Operation of Network.** The firm(s) selected as part of this RFQ will be required to operate the broadband Internet network to provide high-speed broadband internet service to the

identified areas. Evidence of the firm's capability to operate such a network shall be a condition to selection of an applicant by the County as detailed herein.

- J. Agreement Required.** This RFQ is intended to allow the County to identify a firm or firms with which to partner to provide high-speed internet service to County residents. This partnership is and will be subject to the negotiation and execution of a contract between the County and such firm or firms that is mutually agreeable to both parties. The agreement shall establish the terms and conditions of the partnership. Such contract shall clearly detail the relationship and obligations of the County and the selected firm or firms.

II. PROJECT DETAILS

The County of Perry is interested in partnering with one or more firms to facilitate the provision of high-speed broadband Internet service to geographic areas of the County in which such service is not currently available. The selected firm(s) will be expected to collaborate with the County to develop a targeted plan to construct, operate and maintain a wireline, wireless or hybrid high-speed broadband Internet network capable of offering symmetrical 100Mbps upload and download speeds to all residents in the areas of the County served by the network, or scalable to provide such service in accordance with applicable federal and state funding requirements. The selected firm or firms will be required to operate the network to provide high-speed broadband internet service to the identified areas.

The County has conducted a preliminary assessment of the internet speeds currently available to residents in the County as well as the areas in which such service is available. This preliminary assessment has identified certain areas of the County that are considered unserved or underserved. A map of the County is provided below, along with a description of the County's broadband availability issues and currently identified areas in which service is inadequate or unavailable.

[See map on following page.]

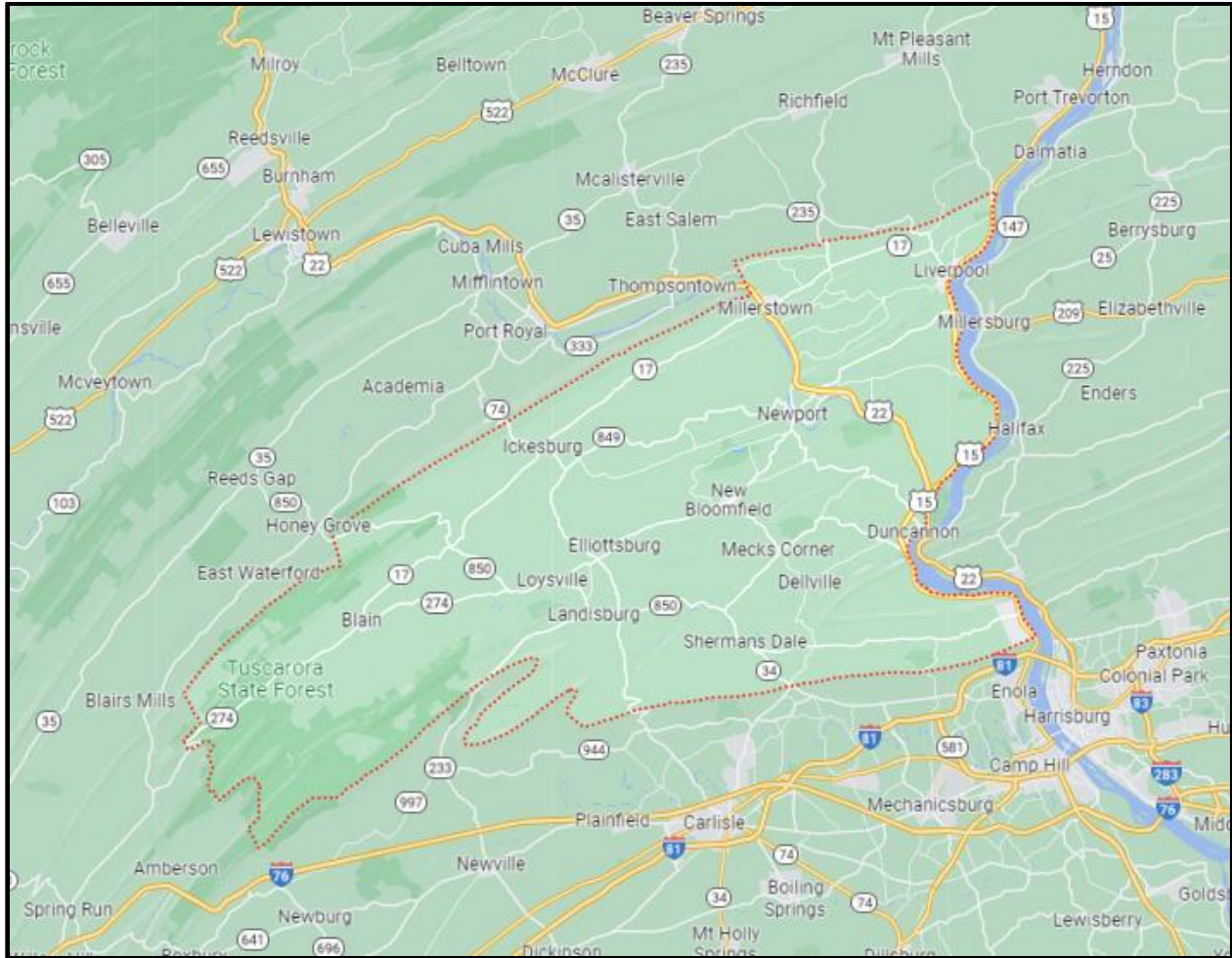


Figure 1. Map of Perry County (County outlined in red)

Identified Issues:

The County has identified several areas in which high-speed broadband Internet service is currently unavailable. The first area includes the majority of the western portion of the County, comprised primarily of the following Townships: Centre Township, Jackson Township, Northeast Madison Township, Southwest Madison Township, Spring Township, Toboyne Township, and Tyrone Township. The second area includes the northeastern portion of the County, comprised primarily of Liverpool Township and significant portions of Buffalo Township and Greenwood Township.

In addition to the areas described above, the County has a number of discrete areas in which high-speed broadband Internet service is unavailable to residents yet have been difficult for the County to adequately map due to their size and location within the existing service areas of the County’s incumbent cable operators. As part of the County’s ongoing efforts in conjunction with any selected applicants, the County anticipates that additional analysis will be necessary to determine with specificity all areas in which service may be provided. As such, the County

welcomes SOQs from applicants who are capable of serving any area of the County in which such applicants have identified a lack of adequate broadband service.

This project may include establishing a public-private partnership through which the County and the selected firm(s) may pursue additional state and/or federal funding. This may include the preparation and submission of an application for federal Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) Program funding to the Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority. The selected applicant(s) must agree to cooperate with the County in its efforts to secure such funding. The County may also elect to subsidize this project or certain elements thereof via the funding received by the County under the American Rescue Plan Act.

III. PROJECT SCHEDULE

The schedule for the project(s) undertaken by the selected applicant(s) will vary depending on the geographic scope of the area(s) selected and the infrastructure required. Each proposal should detail an anticipated schedule in accordance with the requirements of Section IV below.

IV. SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

A. Requirements. All SOQs submitted in response to this RFQ must include the following materials and information:

1. **Statement of interest and qualifications.** Each SOQ must include a statement of interest outlining why the applicant is interested in the project, the applicant's technical and operational qualifications, and why the applicant should be selected for this project.
2. **Description of firm.** Each SOQ must include a description of the firm for whom the SOQ was prepared. The description should include the firm name, specific information regarding the firm ownership, primary contact information, primary office location, general qualifications, and a demonstration of technical expertise sufficient to complete the construction and operation of the proposed network. The firm description should also list each member of the firm that will work on the project along with a brief description of their relevant experience and the anticipated hierarchy of any such participants with respect to this project.
3. **Description of approach.** Each SOQ must include a comprehensive description of the firm's intended approach to the project. This description should identify with specificity the area or areas of the County to which the applicant intends to provide service, the

means by which such service will be provided, and a general plan for the construction of the necessary facilities. The description should further detail the infrastructure and technology necessary to build out the applicant's intended network, any efforts or cooperation needed from the County to facilitate the efficient completion of the project, the intended cost to consumers of the final service offering, and the anticipated long-term operational needs and maintenance plan for the proposed high-speed broadband Internet network.

4. **Anticipated timeline.** Each SOQ must include an estimated timeline for the project. The timeline should clearly state the timeframes in which the applicant expects to complete all necessary construction and the timeframe in which the applicant expects to begin providing service to the designated unserved and/or underserved areas. If the project will be completed in phases or otherwise subdivided, the SOQ should clearly show each anticipated phase and the corresponding timeframe for completion.
5. **Comparable projects.** Each SOQ must include a description of at least three (3) similar projects, either in-progress or completed, by the applicant that demonstrate that the applicant has the technical and operational expertise necessary to complete the proposed project. Such descriptions should include the location of the project, a brief description of the project, the number of current subscribers, the type of technology used in the project, the size and scale of the geographic area covered by the project, and a project reference that the County may contact. The references should each include the reference's name, title, email address, and phone number.
6. **Cost analysis.** Each SOQ should include an estimated time and materials cost proposal detailing the total anticipated cost of each element of the project. The cost analysis should clearly detail the anticipated expenditures of the applicant, any financial support that will be requested from the County, a commitment by the firm to invest its portion of the expenditures, and a statement affirming that the applicant will cooperate in full with the County in its efforts to obtain additional federal and/or state funding as needed to fully fund the project.

B. Format. SOQs may be submitted to the County in printed, hard-copy format or in electronic format by email. SOQs submitted electronically must be in .pdf format.

V. EVALUATION OF STATEMENTS OF QUALIFICATIONS

A. Criteria. Firms submitting SOQs in response to this RFQ will be evaluated based on their ability to demonstrate the following:

1. Qualifications for constructing, operating and maintaining a high-speed broadband Internet network in a rural/suburban setting.
2. Experience in successfully constructing and operating other high-speed broadband Internet networks to provide service to residential and commercial customers.
3. The staffing and resources needed to provide future maintenance and customer service for subscribers in the County.
4. A clear and technically feasible plan for providing the best possible broadband internet service to one or more of the areas identified by the County.
5. An efficient timeline by which the firm will provide high-speed broadband internet services in the County in the shortest timeframe reasonably possible.
6. A viable funding strategy through which the firm intends to fund the project, including self-funding, public-private partnership, and any additional grant funding.
7. Affordability of broadband service being proposed for residential and commercial customers.
8. References that support successful prior experience in building and operating broadband Internet networks.

VI. SELECTION PROCESS

- A. Selection.** The County will evaluate all SOQs in accordance with the standards detailed in this RFQ and applicable federal and state law. The County may choose one or more applicants with whom to proceed with this project. The chosen applicants will be those that have clearly demonstrated their ability to construct, operate, and maintain a high-speed broadband Internet network capable of providing affordable service to the unserved and underserved areas of the County. Selected applicants must further demonstrate their ability to provide such services in the most cost-effective manner. The County reserves the right not to choose any of the applicants if it believes that no applicants adequately satisfy the objectives contained in this RFQ or for any other reason.
- B. Notification.** All applicants will be notified of the results of the RFQ process in writing upon its completion.