

# Request for Proposals

## **Broadband Assessment and Feasibility Study**

### **Purpose of RFP:**

OTO Fiber is requesting proposals (RFP's) from qualified professional consulting firms to conduct a comprehensive broadband assessment and feasibility study. The Study will include (1) mapping broadband services and uptake in the service area to identify and evaluate service and/or adoption gaps; (2) develop sustainable strategies to promote comprehensive broadband access and utility; i.e. education, infrastructure, interfaces, etc.; and (3) as applicable, a business case and deployment plan for OTO Fiber to provide broadband services to the community including identification of potential areas for partnership between OTO Fiber and incumbent ISPs.

The Study should provide a reasonable assessment of the opportunities for OTO Fiber, the most viable and sustainable business, financial and operational models including one-time and recurring third-party funding sources, and a deployment plan that will enable OTO Fiber to take advantage of these opportunities in conjunction with broadband friendly public policy development.

The successful bidder will demonstrate its ability to conduct thorough research such as public surveys, market analysis, business plan development, regulatory understanding, network design, and operational best practice scenarios.

### **OTO Fiber Background:**

Old Town - Orono Fiber (OTO Fiber) is a Maine municipal non-profit corporation formed with three members, the City of Old Town, Town of Orono and the University of Maine System. OTO Fiber was formed to improve the access to ultra-high speed broadband for businesses and residents of Old Town and Orono. OTO Fiber's service area is bounded by the municipal boundaries of the City of Old Town and Town of Orono.

The City of Old Town is an industrial community on the edge of the Great Northern Woods, uniquely located on several islands in the Penobscot and Stillwater Rivers. As of the 2010 census, there were 7,840 people, 3,382 households, and 1,884 families residing in the city. The population density was 201.8 inhabitants per square mile (77.9/km<sup>2</sup>). There were 3,665 housing units at an average density of 94.3 per square mile (36.4/km<sup>2</sup>).

The Town of Orono is the home of the University of Maine, the state's land grant university and the flagship institution in the University of Maine System. As of the 2010 census, there were 10,363 people, 2,831 households, and 1,229 families residing in the town. The population

density was 569.7 inhabitants per square mile (220.0/km<sup>2</sup>). There were 3,089 housing units at an average density of 169.8 per square mile (65.6/km<sup>2</sup>).

**Receipt Of Proposals:**

Nine (9) hard copies and one digital copy of the proposal must be received no later than **Friday, January 22, 2016 at 2:00 p.m.** at the following address:

Belle Ryder  
OTO Fiber  
59 Main St.  
Orono, ME 04473  
Email: belle@orono.org

The nine (9) copies and a digital copy (thumb drive) of the proposal must be submitted in a sealed envelope, the outside of which must be marked as follows:

“Proposal Enclosed – Broadband Assessment and Feasibility Study”

The proposal submitted is the document upon which OTO Fiber will make its initial judgment regarding each proposer’s qualifications and wherewithal to complete the required services.

Those submitting proposals do so entirely at their own expense. There is no express or implied obligation by OTO Fiber to reimburse any firm or individual for any costs incurred in preparing or submitting proposals, preparing or submitting additional information requested by OTO Fiber, or participating in selection interviews, if any.

Submission of any proposal indicates an acceptance of the conditions contained in this Request for Proposals unless the submitted proposal clearly and specifically states otherwise.

OTO Fiber reserves the right to award the contract, in whole or in part, to one or more firms and individuals.

Any award of the study shall be conditioned on the later execution of a formal written agreement. OTO Fiber reserves the right to revoke or rescind any award at any time prior to the full execution of said agreement. A sample Professional Services Agreement is available upon request.

Proposals received subsequent to the time and date specified above may not be considered.

OTO Fiber reserves the right to accept or reject any and all proposals in whole or in part, to waive any and all irregularities and informalities, and to disregard all nonconforming, non-responsive or conditional proposals.

Please note the following as part of the submittal process:

- Submission of the proposal by a Vendors constitutes acceptance by the Vendor of terms, conditions, and requirements set forth herein.
- Any exceptions to the specifications established herein shall be listed in detail on a separate sheet and attached hereto. Exceptions to the RFP will not automatically eliminate the proposal.
- Proposals not conforming to the instructions provided herein will be subject to disqualification at the sole option of OTO Fiber.
- By submitting a proposal, a Vendor is guaranteeing to OTO Fiber that, if chosen, it will be able to provide the proposed services during the period of time discussed in the RFP.
- There is no expressed or implied obligation for OTO Fiber to reimburse any Vendor for any expenses incurred in preparing proposals in response to this RFP or any expenses incurred by any Vendor in providing a demonstration of its product in a place determined by OTO Fiber.
- Any deviation from this requirement may result in any proposal being considered nonresponsive, thus eliminating that proposal from further consideration.
- Interested parties assume all responsibility for sending and confirming receipt of proposals. We encourage the submission of proposals several days before the deadline and confirming that your proposal has been received.

**Anticipated Timeline:**

The following anticipated timeline is subject to change, at the discretion of OTO Fiber:

**November 30, 2015** RFP Posted

**December 18, 2015** Questions from prospective applicants are due by 4:00 PM.  
Questions regarding RFP content must be submitted in writing to:

Belle Ryder  
OTO Fiber  
59 Main St.  
Orono, ME 04473  
Email: belle@orono.org

**January 04, 2016** OTO Fiber's written response to each question will be submitted to all known prospective applicants. If you are interested in receiving the responses to the submitted questions, please email Belle Ryder to indicate your request.

**January 22, 2016** Application submission deadline, applications are due to OTO Fiber no later than 2:00 PM at which time they will be publicly opened.

*Return proposals to the following address:*

Attn: Belle Ryder  
OTO Fiber  
59 Main St.  
Orono, ME 04473  
Email: belle@orono.org

**Proposer Qualifications:**

- A. Proposer should have experience conducting community broadband feasibility studies of similar size and scope to OTO Fiber's project. The proposer should demonstrate its capabilities providing these services in similarly sized municipalities and its ability to work creatively with incumbent providers and other key stakeholders.
- B. Proposer should have past experience working within the telecommunications or broadband industry (carrier or Internet service provider) in a network planning, engineering and business development capacity. This experience must be documented specifically in the proposal.
- C. Proposer should have direct and demonstrable regulatory experience working with Maine communities in regard to State statutes concerning municipal broadband providers, or satisfactorily demonstrate alternative results.
- D. Proposer should have conducted broadband planning projects with municipalities and demonstrate this through its proposal.
- E. Proposer should have designed, implemented and/or operated community broadband networks and demonstrate such experience through its proposal, citing specific networks that are currently in operation.
- F. Proposer should be able to demonstrate its ability to work quickly and thoroughly with adequate resources. OTO Fiber feels time is of essence and an emphasis will be given to those who can complete this project in the most timely manner.
- G. If Proposer intends to use any subcontractors, the response should demonstrate the applicable experience of subcontractor(s) per above.

### **Scope of Work:**

Your proposal should address the following and discuss how you intend to carry out the various tasks and your experience in performing such tasks. In total, this narrative section should be no longer than ten (10) pages in length.

- Define Broadband Standard. Meet with elected representatives and designated stakeholders to identify community development and growth goals. Analyze planning documents and other designated data as necessary to assist in the project.
- Survey businesses and residents. Survey residents and businesses to gather the following information in order to understand the current state of broadband availability in the community:
  - What service residents are currently using and how much they pay.
  - An assessment of the adequacy of current service, with a focus on the quantity and distribution of unserved and underserved residences.
  - Service options residents would like to have to meet their current and projected needs.
  - These surveys will be distributed via mail and digitally. OTO Fiber will pay for the cost of printing and distributing paper surveys.
  - OTO Fiber personnel or designated representatives will provide address information.
- Perform an inventory of telecom assets. Survey the service area's telecommunications infrastructure to determine the following:
  - The carriers currently providing service, and their key assets;
  - Tower assets that might provide wireless broadband solutions;
  - The areas where the Region would like to offer improved broadband;
  - Options for leveraging future infrastructure improvements to improve access.
  - The geospatial survey will provide a baseline for analyzing the gap between current coverage and desired coverage. This will form the basis for proposing a solution.
- Define Service Gap. Work with key stakeholders to define a minimum threshold for broadband access in the region. Compare this against the findings of the asset inventory and articulate specific technological and business model barriers to achieving desired access.
- Provide a high level design for a network solution that closes the identified gap. Engineer a network that can economically close the gap identified as part of the asset inventory. The design will include a review and recommendations of current telecom technology platforms such as copper, fiber, and wireless based services, or some hybrid thereof. The design will contemplate:
  - Existing telecom infrastructure

- Route mileage
  - Central office location
  - Community anchor institutions
- Provide a high level cost estimate for a network solution that meets the standard. In addition to the network design, we will provide a capital expense model that includes the labor, materials, professional services, and other capital cost elements needed to deploy the recommended solution. This information will be a critical factor for attracting capital to fund the project. Line item capital costs will include:
  - Network engineering
  - Environmental permitting
  - Make ready
  - Materials and hardware
  - Optronics equipment
  - Installation labor
  - Network testing
  - Project management
  - Legal and regulatory
- Review business model options and provide guidance on potential challenges. Provide guidance on how to approach the business model discussion with community members and potential collaborative parties, including some suggested models that other communities have pursued and challenges of which to be mindful. These results will be presented in a report so that it may be distributed to the public.
- Develop a strategy for a phased investment approach to deployment.
- Value the economic benefits of the network. Use the benefits transfer method to value the potential benefits of the proposed broadband adoption plans in terms of improved GDP growth, increased tax base, job creation, and consumer wellbeing.
- Final Report. Prepare a final report for review by designated representatives that presents all of the above information in a clear and concise product. Compile comments and prepare a final draft within fifteen business days of receipt of comments.

**BID SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS**

1. Each scope of work item shall be addressed.
2. A not-to-exceed bid shall be provided for the scope of work.
3. OTO Fiber reserves the right to remove any scope of work item.
4. Estimated timeframe for the scope of work shall be provided.
5. Overall project timeline. Emphasis will be given to those who can demonstrate timeliness.
6. Respond to each Proposer Requirement item (items A-G) separately.
7. Project team member biographies.
8. Three references shall be provided for similar projects.