Request for Proposals

Community Participation in a Broadband Pilot Study For

Eastern Maine Development Corporation

August 2016

Overview

Eastern Maine Development Corporation (EMDC) has been awarded a planning grant from the State of Maine ConnectME Authority to launch a pilot project in four communities or partnership of communities supporting the expansion of digital capacity in Eastern Maine. This work will build on activities and planning EMDC and their regional partners recently completed through a strategic planning process, "Re-engineering the Region" that identified better broadband connectivity and adoption as essential to our region's growth and increasing employment/education opportunities.

This project will consist of the selection of four (4) communities (or a partnership of communities representing one application for a county), who are well-positioned to begin the digital planning process, building the necessary "template" to identify their next steps and to expand the model to other communities. Communities need to understand their gaps and best solutions before moving forward on a broadband expansion implementation plan. The final plan will include digital planning that incorporates infrastructure and the current capacity of digital literacy/training, gaps, and solutions to address the gaps.

The grant contains financial resources to be used for this project. Approximately $40,000 will be available for developing four (4) community(s) digital plans. In addition, each community needs to be prepared to commit up to $5,000 as a match to the awarded funds from ConnectME. The level of cash commitment will not be an evaluation factor when selecting the successful bids.

Bidders Conference

A Bidders Conference will be held from 9:00 – 11:00am on Thursday, August 25, 2016 at the EMDC offices on 40 Harlow Street, Bangor ME. The conference will be an opportunity for applicants to ask questions about eligibility and clarification on the application contents/format. Those partnerships thinking about submitting an application in response to this RFP are strongly encouraged to attend as well as communities that are new to broadband planning. Please notify EMDC (vrusbult@emdc.org) if you plan to attend.

Submission Requirements

Communities (or a partnership of communities) interested in being selected to participate in this project are asked to complete the RFP application. Submissions may be sent electronically via e-mail or by mail on paper or on a CD-ROM.

Proposals will be accepted until Monday, October 7, 2016 by close of business (5:00 p.m).

Send email submissions, one (1) PDF and with the subject line "*Company Name*: EMDC's Broadband Pilot Project RFP" to

vrusbult@emdc.org or,

One (1) original and one (1) copy of the proposal to:

Vicki L. Rusbult, EdD, MPA
Director, Re-Engineering the Region & Planning
Eastern Maine Development Corporation
40 Harlow Street
Bangor, ME 04401

Please direct questions regarding this RFP to: Vicki Rusbult at (207) 942-6389, or e-mail vrusbult@emdc.org.

Eastern Maine Development Corporation reserves the right to accept or reject any/or all proposals in total or in part and to waive any informalities.

Purpose of Proposal
EMDC and Axiom Technologies will partner with four (4) communities (or a partnership of communities under one application) in the Eastern Maine region of Hancock, Penobscot, Piscataquis and Waldo counties for this pilot project. *One community will be selected from each county.* This is a critical first step that addresses an important cross-cutting strategy identified in the "Re-Engineering the Region" strategic planning effort – expansion of broadband infrastructure and bridging the digital divide is critical as we work to spur economic growth and revitalization. This strategy, along with building a learning economy and supporting entrepreneurship, is needed to be competitive in the existing and new economies. This project will provide the framework to create a template for building similar technology/digital plans in other communities in Eastern Maine. As a result of this work, we will be arming communities with the information needed to efficiently and cost-effectively expand broadband infrastructure and digital literacy specific to each community's needs.

There are communities that have plans underway to perform this type of investigation independently; this project is intended for those communities who are not equipped to launch a broadband effort on their own.

Work through this pilot effort will combine conversation + data collection and analysis + action to meet project goals. For each pilot participant, those goals will include:
- Needs assessment, inventory, gaps analysis, and mapping of existing infrastructure
- Meetings with municipal officials to discuss public infrastructure needs, and map private infrastructure (if available)
- Interview 10-15 key businesses and community anchor institutions
- Convene community meetings for input
- Through interviews and surveys, define local broadband needs and goals
- Create a Digital Literacy and Inclusion roadmap specific to the Community's needs. The roadmap will include a description of options for Affordable Internet, Affordable Equipment, Digital Literacy Training Plan (business, community/municipal leaders, residential), Public Computer Access, and tentative training schedule.
- Produce a final Community Technology report with key findings and recommendations

Completion of this pilot project will provide the necessary data to inform the Community(s), EMDC, and Axiom Technologies about the recommendations for expansion of broadband capacity. Included in the final product will be the identification of current capacity, gaps of service and training, and real-world solutions to expanding broadband for businesses and residents alike.

This process will also inform other broadband stakeholders who are working to develop short and longer-range plans for increasing the supply and demand for high speed internet access and adoption as a strategy to accelerate economic growth and enhance the quality of life of residents.

Project Schedule
EMDC will review proposals and select the four (4) pilot participants on or about the week of October 10, 2016. If additional information is required, EMDC will contact the community leadership before that date. All bids need to align with requirements of the application process as outlined in this Request for Proposals.

Record Keeping
Records will be completed and retained by EMDC and Axiom Technologies, LL. However, it is recommended that the selected communities retain copies for their formal town records.

Proposal Terms
EMDC reserves the right to reject any and/or all proposals received as a result of the Request for Proposals (RFP) and to waive any informalities. If a proposal is selected, it will be the most advantageous regarding the compliance with RFP eligibility conditions and the capability and the commitment of the community to actively engage in the assessment process. EMDC reserves the right to consider proposals for modification at any time before a contract would be awarded, and negotiations would be undertaken with the Community whose proposal is deemed to best meet EMDC's specifications and needs.

Each bidder must be able to provide a matching contribution of up to $5,000. The amount of the match will not be a determining factor in the selection of the four final participants. Rather, the financial contribution will represent the Community's commitment to engage and support this pilot effort. Please note that communities partnering to submit one application must provide a match to supplement the ConnectME investment of $10,000 per community to equal $10,000 for each partnering community.

In the event that it becomes necessary to revise any part of this RFP, an addendum will be provided. Deadlines for submissions of RFP's may be adjusted to allow for revisions. The entire proposal document with any amendments should be returned. To be considered, a pdf of the revised proposal must be emailed to vrusbult@emdc.org on or before the date and time specified.

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Proposals should be prepared simply and economically by providing a straightforward, concise description of the Community's ability to meet the requirements of the RFP.

All proposals will become the property of EMDC. Information in the proposal will become public property and subject to disclosure laws and EMDC policies and procedures after bid award.

Applicants must prepare a proposal in the format described in this RFP. The format will allow the selection committee to fairly review, compare, and evaluate proposals. Failure to follow the format used in this RFP may result in the proposal being disqualified from consideration.

EMDC will not be liable for any costs associated with the preparation, transmittal, or presentation of any material submitted in response to this RFP.

Proposal Specifications

The proposal shall include all of the following information. Failure to include all information could result in disqualification.

1. Description of Community or partnership of Communities including the geographic and socio-economic landscape, and current broadband efforts. Include a statement that the Community(s) understands the objectives and goals of this pilot project.

2. Description of Broadband Team including primary/key point of contact.

3. Ability to communicate broadband expansion to community-at-large.

4. Identification of Community(s) match up or equal to $5,000. For a partnership of Communities submitting one application, the match will need to supplement the project-allocated $10,000 per pilot site to equal $10,000/Community (i.e., if 4 Communities are partnering under one application, the full match will need to equal $30,000 to support a full assessment of each Community identified in the partnership).

5. Ability and commitment for full collaboration with EMDC and Axiom Technologies to meet project requirements.

6. Readiness of Community(s) to launch broadband project in the Fall of 2016.

Evaluation Criteria

Community(s) selection criteria will include a description of the current capacity, alignment with past broadband efforts including the 3-ring binder,

The criteria used in evaluation of the proposals will include:

- Clarity of the proposal, understanding of the project objectives, and responsiveness to the work program.

- Identification of the Community's or partnership of Communities Broadband Team and key point of contact

- Overview of existing efforts

- Identification of potential Community(s) anchor institutions (i.e., schools, libraries, hospitals, etc.)

- Inclusion of a Community(s) match (evaluated not on amount of match but rather inclusion and commitment to providing a match)

Standard Provisions for Contracts

If selected, the pilot participant will be required to adhere to a set of general provisions which will become part of any formal agreement. The provisions are general principles which adhere to the stipulations of the ConnectME grant award including full engagement of Community stakeholders, adherence to the pilot project timeline, and accessibility to EMDC and Axiom Technologies to perform project work.

Indemnification Agreement

The Community(s) will protect, defend, and indemnify EMDC and Axiom Technologies, its officers, agents, volunteers, and employees from any and all liabilities, claims, liens, fines, demands and costs, including legal fees, of whatsoever kind and nature which may result in injury or death to any persons, including the Community's own employees, and for loss or damage to any property, including property owned or in the care, custody or control of EMDC or Axiom Technologies in connection with or in any way incident to or arising out of the occupancy, use, service, operations, performance or non-performance of work in connection with this pilot project resulting in whole or in part from negligent acts or omissions of the Community(s) or any employee.

Compliance with Laws and Regulations

The Community(s) will comply with all federal, state, and local regulations, including but not limited to all applicable Occupational Safety and Health Administration/Maine Department of Labor (OSHA/MDOL) requirements and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Fair Share Goals

Consideration of all applicants, regardless of size of community, current capacity and financial match, will be made in the selection process. EMDC will exercise appropriate measures to ensure good faith efforts are made during the selection process, with no undue preference given to any applicant.

Ownership of Documents and Publications

Upon completion of the broadband assessment, the final report will be the property of the Community(s) with copies retained by EMDC and Axiom Technologies. The final report may not be copyrighted by the Community. Any use of the information by the Community(s) should reference the sponsorship by EMDC and Axiom Technologies through the pilot project. Any publication of the information by EMDC and Axiom Technologies is allowed through the Community's participation on the pilot project.

Termination of Contract

Either party may terminate the contract by giving thirty (30) day written notice to the other party.

Change in Scope or Schedule of Services

Changes mutually agreed upon by EMDC, Axiom Technologies or the Community(s) will be incorporated into the contract by written amendments signed by all parties.

Format of Technical Proposals

Proposal content and completeness are most important. Proposals should be on recycled paper (if submitted via regular mail), 8.5 x11 inches, in size 12 font. The proposal should not exceed 10 pages in length. In order to simplify the review process and obtain the maximum degree of comparability, all proposals shall be organized in the following manner:

1. Signature Page - The signature page should be signed by an official authorized to bind the Community. It should have the RFP title, name of the partnership/Community local address, voice and fax telephone numbers, name of contact person, email, and website.

2. Overview and Summary - This section should clearly convey that the Community(s) understands the nature of the work, provides a clear overview of the applicant's broadband efforts to date, and identifies the goals for expanding broadband services including infrastructure and digital literacy/training of residents. Identify any perceived barriers that could impact this project from successful completion. A succinct general description of the Community(s) should also be provided.

3. Description of Broadband Capacity – A Pre-Certification Checklist (see next page), modeled after that used by ConnectME, should be completed and attached to the back of the application. Please note that no funds will be available directly from EMDC and/or ConnectME to the Community(s).

4. Schedule – The applicant must indicate that they will be ready to begin the pilot project no later than September 15, 2016, with the goal of completing all pilot project activities by February 2017.

5. Identification of Community(s) Match – a match of up to or equal to $5,000 must be included in the narrative (or in the case of a community partnership, a match that equals $10,000 per participating Community).