

TOWN OF SHARON, CT

Request for Proposals

The Town of Sharon is requesting proposals for the following:

BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE FEASIBILITY ANALYSIS

All submissions must be made in accordance with the specifications supplied by:

The Town of Sharon
Attn: Brent Colley, First Selectman
Town Hall - 63 Main Street
PO Box 385
Sharon, CT 06069

Sealed proposals must be received before 2:00 pm EDT on September 7, 2021

Brent Colley
First Selectman
Tel: 860-364-0205
Fax: 860-492-7021
Email: brent_c@sharon-ct.org

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
Town of Sharon, Connecticut

BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE FEASIBILITY ANALYSIS

I. PROJECT SPECIFICATIONS

1. INTRODUCTION

The Town of Sharon seeks to engage a qualified Engineering and/or Broadband Consulting firm to develop a feasibility analysis for an open-access Fiber-to-the-Premise (FTTP) broadband network serving all Town residents, businesses, government and emergency service providers. Additionally, for comparison purposes, the Town seeks cost estimates for two less extensive networks: (1) a FTTP network that only connects homes and businesses located no more than 200 feet from a state or town road, and (2) a network that passes all homes and businesses along state and town roads, but does not bring fiber to the premises.

The selected firm shall have demonstrated previous experience in engineering broadband networks and in implementing the network rollout. The analysis is expected to include (1) an assessment of the current state of broadband infrastructure and services in town; (2) an initial network engineering proposal; (3) an estimate of the cost to build a network; (4) an estimate of the annual cost to operate and maintain a network, and (5) options for a public-private business model to build, maintain, and operate the broadband network for consideration by the Town.

Deliverables shall be:

- assessment of the current state of Sharon's broadband infrastructure;
- the analysis of estimated costs and timetable for constructing a FTTP network, as well as two alternative network options for comparison, as described above;
- estimated annual costs to cover ongoing network maintenance and operation;
- a suggested business model, including "take-rate" estimates.

The analysis will guide the Town in deciding whether to deploy an affordable, accessible, and reliable broadband network.

2. BACKGROUND

The Town of Sharon is in the upper Northwest Corner of Connecticut. It is a sparsely populated rural area with 1,709 dwellings in a 60-square-mile area, with 32.7 miles of state roads, 81.39 miles of town roads, and 21.7 miles of private roads. It is home to the regional hospital and a skilled nursing facility. There are two small business clusters within walking distance of each other at the Town center that include a grocery store, pharmacy, post office, gas station, three restaurants and a few other small businesses. The Town is served by volunteer fire and ambulance squads and shares a state trooper with other towns. It has one traffic light.

The fiber-optic Connecticut Education Network runs through Town, which provides broadband services to the Hotchkiss Library of Sharon and the Sharon Center School. Sharon Hospital is seeking to connect to this network as well. The Town contemplates leasing access to the CEN, which could serve as the “middle mile” and internet backhaul for a FTTP broadband network.

Much of the land area in Sharon is agricultural. Because of the hilly and heavily forested terrain, many homes have no cellular service and several clusters are not passed by cable internet. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the severity of poor communications. Sharon was not adequately prepared to enable residents to closely follow State and CDC recommendations, or to facilitate town-wide communications and alerts. Work-at-home arrangements were not feasible for many and some school-aged children had unequal or no access to distance learning programs.

3. SCOPE OF SERVICES

The Town seeks to obtain the costs to build an open-access fiber-optic network capable of delivering 1 GB bandwidth, both downstream and upstream:

- to each home and business on state, town and private roads (FTTP);
- to each home and business on state and town roads only (FTTP);
- to pass each home and business on state and town roads (but not FTTP).

If one of the above networks is built, the Town needs to know the expected annual expenses for maintenance and operation for the network. It also needs to know the timetable to build the network and when residential services could likely begin to be offered.

The proposed analysis shall include but not be limited to the following items:

- Design for a FTTP network supported by reliable middle-mile elements;
- Cost estimates for design, installation, and operation of the network;
- Specifications for the amount of fiber and equipment needed;
- Constructability (e.g., ratio of aerial and underground network placement, pole inventory to determine ability to use municipal gain on existing poles);
- Comparison to available municipal broadband models;
- Implementation plan, including regulatory approvals, permitting, pole make-ready, road closures, traffic control and similar necessities;
- Development of recommendations for operation and infrastructure maintenance;
- Development of financial pro-forma figures for each project stage, including analyses that adjust for “take-rate” levels;
- Establishment of a projected monthly operations fee and concurrent service charges for residents and businesses;
- Identification of risk elements to the Town and potential risk mitigation plans;
- Assistance in preparing a presentation by the Town’s Sharon Connect Task Force to meetings of the Town Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance, and residents.

4. AVAILABLE DETAILED INFORMATION

- GIS map of Sharon (email sharonctconnect@gmail.com to request);
- Database of the Ellsworth neighborhood, the largest single area in Town unserved by cable internet. Database includes GPS coordinates of utility pole locations and notations of whether current utility lines are aerial or underground (in process now; email sharonctconnect@gmail.com to request);
- Results of 2020 resident internet access survey (551 households responded);
- Results of Northwest Hills Council of Governments 2018 technical assessment of regional broadband needs.

5. PROJECT RFP SCHEDULE

The following is the proposed selection process schedule:

- Date for RFP issuance: **August 3, 2021**
- Date for submission of proposals: **September 7, 2021**
- Contract approved by Town: **September 29, 2021**
- Contract finalized: **October 6, 2021**
- Deliverables due: **January 10, 2022**

II. SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

1. Submission Due Date

Written, sealed proposals will be accepted by the Town of Sharon in person or by mail until 2 pm EDT of September 1, 2021. Submissions received after that time will not be considered. Submissions may be withdrawn 90 days after opening if no award has been made.

2. Directions for Written Submission

Interested firms are required to submit the proposal, on paper and sealed in an inner envelope, to the First Selectman listed on the opening page of this RFP, no later than the date and time noted above. Submittals shall consist at a minimum of the following elements:

- a. A transmittal letter signed by the appropriate officer of the firm offering the set of proposals, certifying that the submittal and all information contained therein is accurate. The firm should also provide proof that it is insured and licensed to do business in Connecticut.
- b. A concise and complete description of the work to be performed, including an explanation of the firm's understanding of the project, its approach to the work, and the key issues to resolve. Also please include a detailed work program and timetable for each phase of the project, including milestones for periodic review of progress.
- c. A fee schedule for the services provided.
- d. The proposal must affirmatively state that the proposer is an equal opportunity employer and will conform to all laws and executive orders concerning publicly funded projects and purchases.

3. Questions about this RFP

If it becomes necessary to revise any part of this request or if additional information is necessary to interpret provisions of this document, revisions or

addenda will be provided to all prospective firms who receive this document. Questions regarding this RFP should be addressed to the Sharon Connect Task Force at sharonctconnect@gmail.com or to the First Selectman listed on the first page. A summary of any questions and answers will be made available to each firm if they might influence the award of this contract.

4. Criteria for Award of this RFP

Selection of the awarded entity will be the responsibility of the Town's Board of Selectmen, advised by members of the Sharon Connect Task Force, which consists of Town-designated representatives. The Town reserves the right to reject any and all proposals. The evaluation will be based on the written submissions and, if necessary, selected interviews. The factors that will be evaluated (not necessarily listed in order of priority) include the following:

- The firm's knowledge of, and experience with, municipal broadband infrastructure deployment;
- Responsiveness, quality, and completeness of submission;
- Capacity of the proposed team;
- The firm's proposed schedule, including process milestones;
- The proposed fee schedule. Please note that evaluation and subsequent award of a resultant contract is primarily based on qualifications and not based on fee schedule. However, of course the costs are an important factor in the evaluation process. If your firm is selected for an interview, and as a result of the interview certain clarifications and adjustments need to be made to the fee schedule you submitted, your firm will be allowed to adjust your fees to meet the new elements.

IV. FORM & LINKS

1. Submission Form
2. GPS data for utility pole locations in the Ellsworth neighborhood, identified by pole owner and pole number, noting where utilities are aerial or underground. Email sharonctconnect@gmail.com to request.
3. Link to GIS maps of Sharon. Email sharonctconnect@gmail.com to request.
4. Links to [2020 resident survey](#) and [2018 regional technical analysis](#).
5. [Members](#) and [contact information](#) for Sharon Connect Task Force.

Proposal Submission Form
TOWN OF SHARON, CT

BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE FEASIBILITY ANALYSIS

Due Date: 2:00 pm EDT, September 7, 2021

The Town of Sharon

Brent Colley, First Selectman

Town Hall - 63 Main Street

PO Box 385

Sharon, CT 06069

In accordance with the Town's requirements, the undersigned agrees to provide services as defined herein. The undersigned is familiar with the conditions surrounding this Request for Proposals and is aware that the Town reserves the right to reject any and all proposals.

The undersigned affirmatively states that it is an equal opportunity employer and will conform to all laws and executive orders concerning publicly funded projects and purchases.

Company Name

Representative Name, Title

Company Address

Contact Email Address

Contact Phone Number