



Central Texas Council of Governments

Request for Proposals

Regional Broadband Evaluation

Proposals due November 1, 2021, at 2:00 p.m.

Introduction

The Region – The Central Texas Council of Governments (CTCOG) Region, which is situated approximately 60 miles north of Austin, encompasses 7 counties: Bell, Coryell, Hamilton, Lampasas, Milam, Mills, and San Saba, as well as 32 cities. CTCOG covers approximately 6,605 square miles with a population of 527,639 and growing. The CTCOG region includes Fort Hood army installation, which is among the most populous U.S. military installations in the world and has a footprint of approximately 214,000 acres. The region also is situated along two major national highway corridors, IH-35 and IH-14, and many state highway corridors, which provide for the critical movement of people, goods and military freight across the state and nation. The region’s central location offers its residents proximity to many large cities, with the benefits of smaller town living.

<u>Fast Facts</u> -	<u>CTCOG Region</u>	<u>TX</u>
Median Age	33	35.1
Median Household Income	\$53,449.00	\$60,820.00
Population	527,639	29,806,340

The Vision – The CTCOG region has a lot to offer – location, quality schools, low cost of living, great parks, and engaged communities. With the data to better understand gaps and barriers to broadband service, digital literacy skills, and stakeholder goals, the CTCOG will be able to move to create a regional broadband plan. Three CTCOG counties have been evaluated through a free program with Connected Nations-Texas, leaving four remaining counties to be evaluated- Bell, Coryell, Hamilton, and Mills counties.

The Issues – The COVID-19 Pandemic has exacerbated the digital divide across the region. As more services turned to internet-based operations, the region struggled to keep up as many residents, businesses, and governments lacked access to reliable and affordable internet. Additionally, lack of digital literacy evermore widened the digital divide, especially in certain parts of the region.



The CTCOG region is growing as many people move to the area from Austin, Dallas, and Houston seeking the comforts of rural areas and small towns, but the potential growth is hindered by the broadband issues across the region.

These problems plague both, the rural, and urban areas while impacting all socio-economic groups, but exponentially those who are more rural and reside in the more economically distressed areas.

Economically, this impacts the region through loss of potential wages, reduction in online job training, and lack of opportunities for acquiring talent. Over the past year, the Independent School Districts had to pivot to remote learning even as a large proportion of students in some districts did not have access to internet. Through state and federal funding, there was a deployment of hotspots throughout the state to households with school-aged students. This was a short-term solution with many limitations. Even through natural disasters such as Winter Storm Uri, the region was limited on their response due to lack of broadband. The Federal Emergency Management Administration and President Biden did not declare

a disaster in the rural counties, because the rural counties had not reported enough damage. Counties were not able to report damage as easily, because the primary way to document damage relied on broadband and technology access. The lack of disaster declaration impacts the winter storm recovery of the region. Each issue the region faces gets compounded in severity because of lack of broadband: healthcare, education, workforce, and business. While other places that have access to broadband are able to better recover and move up the ladder from disasters, places in the region without broadband are slower to recover and less resilient.

The Proposal – This Request for Proposals is prepared by the Central Texas Council of Governments (CTCOG) for the assessment and evaluation of broadband across the seven CTCOG counties: Bell, Coryell, Hamilton, Lampasas, Milam, Mills, and San Saba. **Proposals must be received by 2:00 p.m. November 1, 2021, via email to Anna Barge at anna.barge@ctcog.org.**

The proposal has 3 differing scopes. Two scopes will allow for communities to determine what level of data analysis is needed while the third scope provides an option for those communities that already have the necessary data to start researching potential strategies to be included in a regional broadband plan.

This proposal will be followed by another proposal for the actual strategy and implantation of a regional broadband plan.

Contacts - Potential Contractors are encouraged to contact Anna Barge, 254-346-0308, or Uryan Nelson, 254-770-2373, for additional information.

Project Scope 1

The Scope may be modified based on the recommendation of the contractor and needs of the CTCOG. Contractors should be qualified and prepared to perform the following tasks:

1. Introductory Meeting - Review of current conditions, desired outcomes, and options. Finalize and agree to Scope. This meeting will be with CTCOG staff.
2. Stakeholder Meeting - Evaluate concerns and priorities of partners from each of the counties that will be evaluated.
3. Survey Development - Survey will be evaluated by CTCOG staff and regional partners. The survey will be developed to identify key gaps in broadband including physical access, financial access, and digital literacy.
4. Survey Distribution - Contractors will work alongside CTCOG staff and regional partners to distribute surveys.
5. Anchors - Identification of point of presence (pops). Estimate of bandwidth needed/desired. Forecast of potential community bandwidth needed.
6. Survey data collection and evaluation - Survey data will be collected and evaluated for each county.
7. Survey report - A separate survey report will be created for each county based on that county's data. The survey report will include relevant mapping data.

Deliverables for Project Scope 1

Contractor shall provide a finished product for each of the counties in the region that do not have necessary data available to move forward with a regional strategy and implementation plan. The final product shall include a report summarizing the survey data for each county, a full detailed report, and mapping data as deemed necessary.

Project Scope 2

1. Survey report review - Review survey report with stakeholders.
2. Field Validation - The contractor will complete field validation and outside plant audit to confirm provider services boundaries, deployed infrastructure assets, broadband speeds, and delivery platforms.
3. Anchors - Identification of point of presence (pops). Estimate of bandwidth needed/desired. Forecast of potential community bandwidth needed.

Deliverables for Project Scope 2

1. Field validation map - This will be an interactive map that contains data layers representing the validated broadband infrastructure data from the field validation project.
2. Field audit - This report will include the analysis and recommendations.

Project Scope 3

1. Introductory Meeting - Review of current conditions, desired outcomes, and options. Finalize and agree to Scope for Project Scope 3.
2. Design of Distribution System - Review of conceptual options related to service delivery means and routes. Analysis of potential ISP delivery technologies. Comparison of fiber to home, mesh, and wireless options. Development of estimates of probable costs related to options. Review scalable options.
3. Conceptual Design of Backbone Routes - Evaluation of options for connection to backbone including, but not limited to, fiber optic, and microwave. Development of cost estimates related to options. Identification and location of available dark fiber.
4. Anchors - Identification of point of presence (pops). Estimate of bandwidth needed/desired. Forecast of potential community bandwidth needed.
5. Ownership/Partnership of infrastructure - Development of Options related to financing, partnership, ownership, and control of technology infrastructure. Identification of possible financing models including private investment.
6. Interim Meeting - Scheduled as needed for follow-up, clarification, and focus.
7. Project Assessment - Development of timelines, tasks, potential leadership, and desired outcomes.
8. Presentation - Meeting to deliver and present findings and report.

Deliverables for Project Scope 3

Contractor shall prepare and present a written report related to technology design, cost, feasibility, and options that will ultimately improve the broadband capacity, reliability, and redundancy in the project area.

Proposals

All Proposals shall include the following information:

1. Proposal: Describe proposed approach to completing requested deliverables, to include scope of services, tentative schedule, engagement of private sector industry methodology, examples of previous engagement with private sector industry, and estimated budget. This section should be limited to 5 pages.
2. Brief resumes of personnel that will be engaged with this project. This section should be limited to 2 pages.
3. Previous experience in similar projects, the timelines, and references. - This section should be limited to 2 pages.

Proposals will be evaluated on the following:

- Qualifications and experience of Contractor team relating to the project as stated in the Scope.
- Quality of work on similar or related projects previously undertaken; References.
- Estimated project cost.
- Private sector engagement strategy
- Familiarity with and proximity to the CTCOG planning area.

Proposals will be reviewed and scored by CTCOG prior to November 14, 2021.

Proposal Form

Proposal due November 1, 2021, by 2:00 p.m. to Central Texas Council of Governments; Attn: Planning Director, 2180 N Main St., Belton, TX 76513

The Contractor represents that they shall be engaged in, and now does such work and is fully equipped, competent, and capable of performing such work as described herein.

Company Name _____

Company Address _____

Company Phone Numbers _____

Contact Name _____

Please list anticipated Sub-Contractors _____

Anticipated Time for Completion in days _____

Estimated Cost _____

Please attach:

1. Resumes of Key Personnel
2. List of similar projects, including timelines, cost, and outcomes
3. Proposed schedule of tasks, timelines, and staff responsible
4. References

I have fully read and understand the contents of this Request for Proposal and certify that I am authorized to execute this proposal on behalf of _____ (company name). I further certify that I am willing, able, and competent to complete the tasks as outlined.

Authorized signature

Printed Name