



Request for Proposals

Grundy County Broadband Analysis, Strategy, and Feasibility Study

Release Date: Nov. 4, 2024

Due Date: Nov. 22, 2024

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I. Introduction

A. PURPOSE

The Grundy County Economic Development Council (GEDC) and the Grundy County Chamber of Commerce (Chamber), collectively “the Partners,” are soliciting proposals for a Grundy County Broadband Analysis and Feasibility Study (RFP). This study is a component of a larger project, the *Grundy County Nuclear Host Community Economic Resiliency Strategy*, or the “Grundy Resiliency Project,” funded by the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA) and Grundy County.

The objective of this Broadband Analysis and Feasibility Study is to provide a broadband framework and structural model that improves internet connectivity and access in Grundy County. The final plan should be actionable, targeted, and grounded in best practices. It should build on **North Central Illinois Council of Governments’ [recently completed Broadband Recovery Plan](#)**. While NCICG’s plan (developed by TPMA) outlined recommendations for a seven-county region (including Grundy), this RFP seeks proposals for how Grundy County, in partnership with the public and private sectors, can implement a long lasting structural entity that can execute the findings in the Broadband Recovery Plan.

B. BACKGROUND/STATEMENT OF NEED

Grundy County, with a population of about 54,000 residents, is located in the southwestern portion of the Chicago MSA. Although the majority of the county’s land use is agriculture, the county has a long history of industrial, energy, and healthcare facilities. It boasts significant transportation and utility assets which have driven economic development activity in the region. Interstate 80 runs along the northern portion of the county and Interstate 55 runs along the eastern side. The county has four class-one railroads and the navigable Illinois River running through it. In Goose Lake and Aux Sable townships, the primary energy assets include Constellation Dresden Station, Aux Sable Liquid Products, newly constructed CPV Three Rivers Energy generating station, significant transmission lines including 345kV and 765kV lines, interstate pipelines, Chevron biofuels, 138 wind turbines, and solar installations. World-class chemical plants are led by LyondellBasell, Nouryon, Reichhold, and others. The top individual employer in the county is Morris Hospital and its auxiliary healthcare facilities, and the top industry by GDP is utilities. In the last 15 years, the logistics industry has increased its prominence in the region with nearly 15 million square feet under roof, primarily along I-80 in Minooka and Morris. Land, transportation corridors, and energy assets will continue to fuel development in the region.

The GEDC and the Chamber applied to the US EDA for grant funding when the future of Constellation Dresden Station (Dresden) was uncertain, and the risk of a plant closure was very possible. Dresden is the second largest employer in Grundy County, with approximately 865 direct, indirect, and induced jobs; the largest property tax payer in the County, Dresden has an annual tax bill estimated at or near \$26 million. Grundy County's economy and quality of life is highly interconnected to the viability of Dresden Nuclear Station. Despite Illinois' financial incentives for nuclear plants to remain open and the now positive outlook for nuclear energy, the EDA has encouraged the GEDC and the Chamber, through this grant award, to develop a strategic plan to promote the diversity and resiliency of the local economy for the future, with or without Dresden.

The first stage of the Project, an Economic Overview of Grundy County developed by the University of Michigan's Economic Growth Institute (EGI), [available here](#), included a high-level overview of the state of broadband in Grundy County. The main component of the Grundy Resiliency Project, Advancing Grundy: the Grundy County Diversification and Resiliency Plan, is currently in process. It will combine the insights from EGI's Economic Overview on Grundy County's assets, clusters, and strengths with additional data and insights on developing markets and industries that represent realistic opportunities for economic diversification within the County.

As accessible, affordable, reliable, and fast broadband is a necessary condition for full participation in today's economy, a broadband analysis and feasibility study (this RFP) is also included as a part of the Grundy Resiliency Project. It is the intention that this study will build upon both the broadband data collected by EGI (above) and the **North Central Illinois Council of Governments' [recently completed Broadband Recovery Plan](#)**. Grundy County and its municipalities recognize the importance of robust, accessible broadband but do not have the resources, staff and expertise to implement the recommendations in the Broadband Recovery Plan.

II. Goals/Objectives, Scope of Work, Deliverables, and Services to be Performed

A. GOALS and OBJECTIVES

- a. Provide a broadband framework and structural model that is sustainable and consistent with Grundy County's community characteristics which encourages public and private sector participation which results in improving broadband availability and speeds within Grundy County, with a focus on under- and un-served residents, institutions, and businesses. The plan should be as specific as possible in its recommendations given the designated budget and timeframe.
- b. Avoid duplicating efforts. This strategy should build upon previous studies, including the analysis completed by [EGI](#) and [NCICG/TPMA](#).

B. SCOPE - Proposers are encouraged to suggest a scope of work which will effectively accomplish the above goals and objectives within the identified budget and timeframe (below), building upon previously completed analyses. *The components outlined below*

represent suggestions and possibilities, but are not requirements. For any item a proposer suggests within their proposal, how the proposer intends to carry out the various tasks and their experience in performing these tasks should be addressed. In total, this narrative section should be no longer than ten (10) single-spaced pages.

a. Conduct Public Engagement

- i. Facilitate workshops and/or focus groups with key stakeholders (local governments, private ISPs, utility companies, and the community) to gather qualitative data on local challenges, opportunities, and **options** for partnerships including Public Private Partnership (PPP) structures.

b. Partnership Opportunities: Identify potential public, private, utilities and non-governmental entities that could participate in a broadband partnership.

c. Model Analysis: Present an analysis of various framework models that could be effective for broadband expansion in rural areas. The analysis should include risk-sharing frameworks and governance structures including but not limited to:

- i. Key success factors and challenges associated with each model.
- ii. Evaluate the suitability of each model in the context of rural broadband expansion.
- iii. Provide comparative analysis of potential models, including traditional concession models, joint ventures, lease agreements, and community-driven partnerships.

d. Financial Modeling and Risk Assessment

- i. Perform a financial analysis of each proposed model, including cost-benefit assessments, funding mechanisms, and projected return on investment.
- ii. Identify and assess risks, including financial, operational, and regulatory risks, and propose mitigation strategies for each model.

e. Legal and Regulatory Framework Review

- i. Review relevant local, state, and federal regulations impacting broadband expansion and PPPs.
- ii. Analyze legal frameworks governing public investment, private sector involvement, and the role of private ISP's and utility companies.
- iii. Provide recommendations on necessary legal adjustments or policy changes to facilitate effective PPPs in rural broadband projects.

C. DELIVERABLES

Proposers are encouraged to suggest deliverables within their proposals which they feel will best serve the goals and objectives outlined above. Expected deliverables shall include:

- A full, **written strategic plan/report**, in PDF format, containing:
 - An Executive Summary
 - An explanation of the plan's development and methodology
 - A full narrative of the analysis, recommendations, and strategic plan

- Case studies of successful governance structures used in comparable counties.
- An implementation matrix with identified responsibilities and partners
- An appendix containing any supporting documents, background data, and data sources
- A **slide deck presentation** synthesizing the primary findings, recommendations, and action steps from the plan/report, suitable for a general audience.

Printed (no more than 15) and electronic copies of deliverables should be provided. Raw data may be provided in electronic format, only.

D. SERVICES and Additional Expectations

- The consultant should plan for two in-person meetings. The first will be a kick-off meeting with a local “steering committee.” The second will be to present and explain the semi-final Grundy County Broadband Analysis to key stakeholders in the Grundy Resiliency Project.
- The consultant should plan to participate in routine, virtual progress meetings to provide updates on the status of the project. The consultant should propose target dates for at least three progress updates in the Project Work Plan of the Proposal.
- The consultant should plan to provide a preliminary draft of work, subject to at least one round of feedback and revisions from the Partners, prior to delivery of the final report by February 28, 2025.
- In response to this RFP, consultants are encouraged to suggest any other components, services, or deliverables not specifically outlined within this RFP that the respondent deems appropriate and necessary to the purpose and intended use of the plan.

III. Eligible Applicants

All types of entities are eligible to submit proposals, including public, not-for-profit, and for-profit organizations. The applicant must be able to demonstrate previous experience, the capacity, and the commitment to implement this project. All applicant entities must have been a legal organization for a minimum of one year prior to the start of the contract.

The procurement of proposals is being undertaken in compliance with the federal guidelines set forth in the "Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards Final Rule" (also known as the Super-circular or Omni-circular). All contractor(s) selected under this RFP must follow the guidelines set forth in this circular, found at <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200>.

In connection with this project, the contractor shall not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. The contractor

shall take affirmative action to ensure that any involved staff members are treated during employment without regard to their race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.

The expense of preparing and submitting a proposal in response to this request is the sole responsibility of the respondent/consultant/firm.

The Partners reserve the right to award the grant-funded work of the broadband analysis and feasibility study to respondents as they deem to be in the best interest of the overarching Grundy Resiliency Project, the County, and its residents. The Partners reserve the right to accept or reject any submissions, including the right to reject all submissions and re-solicit, if deemed necessary, or to cancel in part or in whole this RFP. This solicitation in no way obligates the Partners to award a contract.

IV. Budget

The Partners have budgeted **\$40,000** for the entirety of this broadband analysis. This project is funded by a grant through the U.S. Economic Development Administration, with additional, local funding provided by Grundy County. For all tasks requested within this RFP, please indicate in your proposal which tasks, if any, may not be feasible within the available budget. Please provide a quote for the additional cost to complete those items.

V. Submission

Proposals will be due **by 4:00 PM CST on Nov. 22, 2024**, to the Partners **via email** to nnorton@gedc.com and christina@grundychamber.com with the subject line **“Grundy Resiliency Project Broadband Analysis RFP Submission.”** A receipt will be emailed when a proposal is received and viewed. If respondents (proposing entities) do not receive an email receipt, it is their responsibility to contact the Partners to verify receipt of the proposal. No proposals will be accepted after the deadline date. Paper submissions will not be accepted.

VI. Procurement and Project Timeline

The following timetable is proposed:

Nov 4, 2024: Broadband Analysis RFP is issued

Nov 22, 2024: All proposals are due to the Partners by 4 PM CST

TBD: Possible in-person or virtual interviews with steering committee

December 13, 2024: Deadline by which project contract will be awarded for Broadband Analysis Plan

February 28, 2025: Final report due

Applicants must be prepared to begin the project immediately following the award of a contract.

VII. Proposal Guidelines

A. Format

Submissions must be prepared as a standard 8 ½ x 11, letter-size document, be limited to 20 pages (not including resumes or appendices), and submitted in PDF format to nnorton@gedc.com and christina@grundychamber.com.

B. Cover Letter

A statement must be signed by an authorized representative of the firm committing to provide the services within the proposed schedule. Please provide the contact person for this RFP, their phone number, and their email address. *The attached cover sheet should also preface the proposal.*

C. Background and Experience

Describe the background/experience of the proposing individual or organization including experience providing the same or similar services.

D. Project Work Plan / Program Description

Discuss how services to be performed related to each required component under Section I.B will be implemented, developed, and completed. This section should identify the methodology and data sources that will be used. An implementation timetable must be included and specify target dates, including the project start date, the data collection phase, routine project updates, the tentative draft report delivery date, and the final report delivery date. *For more information on the implementation timetable, please see item G.*

E. Staffing Plan and Qualifications

Each respondent is required to submit a staffing plan to include the total number of staff assigned to the project, as well as the background and resumes of staff assigned to the project.

Should outside consultants or contractors be proposed to contribute to specific aspects of the plan, please note the areas of the plan to which these consultants would contribute, as well as their names, roles, organizations, and qualifying experience, as available.

F. Fiscal Management Plan and Budget

All proposals should present a budget outlining specific dollar amounts assigned to proposed services. *Each proposal must include the required Budget Form attached herewith, or a similar alternative budget breakdown.*

The financial plan must describe all costs associated with implementing the project that are to be covered with the grant funds. All costs should be necessary and reasonable according to the Federal guidelines set forth in the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards set forth in 2 CFR 200, commonly referred to as "Super-Circular" or "Omni-Circular."

The review of cost items may include a comparison of costs among respondents or consultants, comparisons of average costs with previous experience, and a comparison of individual cost items with market prices. Proposals that may score well against program design and effectiveness criteria may not be selected because of unreasonable, excessive unexplained, or unallowable costs.

G. Proposed Timetable

The consultant should provide a proposed project timeline or implementation timetable. The timetable should clearly delineate project tasks and stages, as well as target dates for engagement with the Partners, project updates, delivery of drafts and final products, and any other specific tasks necessary for the successful completion of the planned scope of work.

H. References

Provide the contact name, organization, address, email, and telephone number of three (3) recent clients for which similar tasks were performed.

VIII. Evaluation Procedures

A committee will evaluate proposals according to the requirements of this RFP. Proposals will first be evaluated for minimum requirements, and those that do not meet minimum standards will be eliminated.

The proposal will be awarded based on the following evaluation criteria:

Description	Points Awarded
Experience and background of respondent/organization in providing services requested in this RFP, including a record of past performance, the ability to meet specifications, and the technical skills to accomplish the work.	10
Specific work plan to include collection/analysis of data, development of broadband analysis plan, solicitation of feedback, incorporation of feedback, and sharing of final recommendations, including a project timeline of the work to be performed and delivered.	50
Names, qualifications and experience of personnel to be assigned to the project	15
A budget and timeline setting forth specific deliverables	25
Total Points	100

IX. QUESTIONS

All questions regarding this RFP must be submitted in writing via e-mail to Nancy Norton and Christina Van Yerpen at nnorton@gedc.com and christina@grundychamber.com by 4:00 PM CST on Nov. 15, 2024, with the subject line “Questions and Requests for Clarification” relating to the RFP, and are not RFP submissions. No questions will be accepted after this date. Responses to all questions will be posted on the Grundy Resiliency Project website, resilientgrundy.com, by 4:00 PM CST on Nov. 19, 2024.

X. GENERAL ASSURANCES PROVISIONS

- A. Any verbal comments or discussion concerning this solicitation cannot add, delete or modify any written provision of this Request for Proposal. Only changes to the requirements of this RFP issued in writing will have force.
- B. Upon request, respondents may be asked to furnish satisfactory evidence of their ability to successfully provide the services requested by this RFP. This evidence may include copies of reports on prior independent audits of the respondent. The Partners reserve the right to make the final determination as to the respondent’s capabilities.
- C. The Partners reserve the right to accept or reject any or all proposals for any reason and to negotiate with any and all respondents on modifications to proposals.
- D. The proposal submitted by the successful respondent, modified as necessary through negotiations, will become part of a contractual agreement between the Partners and the successful respondent.

- E. All data, material, and documentation originated or prepared by the respondent pursuant to a contract award shall be in the public domain, will be subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, and may be freely used and disseminated by the Partners as they deem appropriate.
- F. The successful respondent will be required to provide regular and detailed service and expenditure reports to the Partners at a frequency and in a manner prescribed in the contract.
- G. The Partners reserve the right to conduct discussions with respondents. Respondents will be accorded fair and equal treatment concerning any opportunity for discussion of their proposals. Respondents may be required to make oral presentations, participate in negotiations, and to re-write portions of proposals as agreed during negotiations.
- K. The Partners are Equal Opportunity Employers and will give consideration to all qualified applicants for employment without regard to race, color, religions, national origin, ancestry, ages, sex marital status, order of protection status, sexual orientation, pregnancy, or unfavorable discharge from military services as those terms are defined in section 1-103 of the Illinois Human Rights Act (775 ILCS 5/1-103).

Response Cover Sheet

Name of Consultant/Respondent Organization: _____

Type of Organization:

- Public entity
- Private not-for-profit organization
- Private for-profit organization
- Other

Address: _____

City, State, Zip Code: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Fax Number: _____ Federal Employer ID Number: _____

DUNS Number: _____

Name of Authorized Representative: _____

Authorized Representative email Address: _____

Statement of Certification

The information contained in this proposal fairly represents the proposed operating plans and budget necessary to conduct the activities described. The consultant/respondent organization assures that it is prepared to implement the activities described in the proposal. This proposal has been duly authorized by the governing body of the consultant/respondent organization. I certify that I am authorized to sign this statement on behalf of the organization submitting this proposal.

Printed Name of Authorized Representative

Title

Signature of Authorized Representative

Date

BUDGET

LINE ITEM	BUDGET AMOUNT
Wages – Staff	
Fringe Benefits	
Staff Travel	
Rent	
Insurance/Bonds	
Supplies	
Communications	
Copying/Printing	
Utilities	
Equipment	
Other	
TOTAL BUDGET	