

RFP NO. (202301)

South Bay Cities Council of Governments

Technical Consulting for Needs/Market Assessment & Design Engineering Planning in Support of the South Bay Cities Council of Governments' "Digital Equity Project"

January 25, 2023

Deadline for submittal is close of business:

5:00 PM Pacific Time - Wednesday, February 22, 2023

Questions must be submitted in writing by e-mail to info@southbaycities.org

by: 5:00 PM PACIFIC – Monday, February 13, 2023

Responses to all questions to be posted by Tuesday, February 14, 2023

The South Bay Cities Council of Governments is seeking proposals for Technical Consulting for Needs/Market Assessment & Design Engineering Planning in Support of the South Bay Cities Council of Governments' "Digital Equity Project"

The South Bay Cities Council of Governments (SBCCOG) is a joint powers authority of 16 diverse cities and the South Bay unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County. Members of the SBCCOG share the mission of improving transportation and the environment while strengthening economic development in the South Bay. Information on the SBCCOG can be found at: <https://southbaycities.org>.

REQUIREMENTS

This project is funded through a California Public Utilities Commission Local Agency Technical Assistance (LATA) grant. All applicants are required to hold a California state license through the contractor's state license board (<https://www.cslb.ca.gov/>).

Procurement schedule

- Deadline for submittal is: **5:00 PM Pacific Time - Wednesday, February 22, 2023**
- Pre-Proposal Meeting: 1:30 PM Pacific – Thursday, February 9, 2023, Pre-proposal meeting will be held via Zoom. Please email aaron@southbaycities.org to RSVP and receive the Zoom link.
- Questions: all questions and requests for changes in the RFP must be submitted in writing by e-mail to: info@southbaycities.org
- Final Deadline for submission of questions and requests for changes in the RFP is: 5 PM PACIFIC – Monday, February 13, 2023
- Responses to all questions to be posted by close of business: Tuesday, February 14, 2023
- Notice/Invitation for Proposer Interview: Friday, March 2, 2023
- Proposer Interviews: Wednesday, March 8, 2023. (If necessary, based on the number of respondents, Thursday, March 9, 2023 - (Time TBD between 9 AM – 4 PM Pacific)

- Steering Committee approval: Monday, March 13, 2023
- Anticipated Notice to Proceed: Wednesday, March 15, 2023 (pending SBCCOG Steering Committee Contract Approval)

DIGITAL EQUITY PROJECT

Overview

The SBCCOG is seeking proposals for technical assistance to analyze the existing South Bay small & micro-business broadband market focusing on underserved areas to better understand the need and demand for services within these communities and throughout the South Bay. Deliverables from this work will yield a market and needs driven technical plan along with engineering details that the SBCCOG and its member cities will use for expanding the middle mile South Bay Fiber network – This project is called the Digital Equity Project. When implemented, the Digital Equity Project will provide a “roadmap” for mitigating broadband access inequities within the South Bay.

There are three components required to develop the Digital Equity Project.

1. Inventory of broadband assets and resources both public and private - that might be leveraged and used to mitigate and address the underserved broadband areas of the South Bay.
2. Broadband gap assessment - results from the inventory will identify the broadband “gaps” and opportunities to address inequities found within these communities.
3. “Shovel-ready” technical plans, drawings, and engineering details -- used to advise logical network expansion of the SBCCOG’s South Bay Fiber Network (SBFN) that, when built, will mitigate the “Digital Divide” – providing these underserved communities broadband connection opportunities at speeds of 100 Mbps or better.
4. Community Engagement to be conducted by the SBCCOG with technical assistance by the selected consultant as needed

The full scope of work is listed below. Note: that the SBCCOG staff will be developing some portions of the work products and this responsibility is noted in the scope of work. The total budget for the entire project is \$498,949.00. Vendor proposals should anticipate that approximately 20% of the total will be allocated for SBCCOG related tasks.

Background

In 2020, the SBCCOG completed a dedicated fiber-optic network for the South Bay region. The rationale for developing broadband infrastructure flowed from the SBCCOG’s sustainability strategies for reducing Green House Gas (GHG) emissions while addressing the real demand for improving broadband infrastructure as an engine for economic development. A broadband [“Master Plan”](#) was developed for the region that led to a competitive selection process to address these issues.

The new network, called [the South Bay Fiber Network \(SBFN\)](#), was created through a public-private partnership. Assembled as a backbone network with ring architecture with middle mile lateral connections, the network operates through a combination of 85% (leased) available private fiber network capacity (e.g., Crown Castle fiber) with approximately 15% of the network built as new lateral

construction. The SBFN connects key anchor institutions, including city halls and regional public agencies, to high-speed carrier grade broadband. The network design and business plan resulted in the creation of a new middle-mile network – built at 25% of the cost of overbuilding existing infrastructure and in 20% of the time that new construction would have required. The SBFN began initial operations in August 2020. Contractually, SBFN operations, network specifications, customer service, service level details, and the network’s business model are memorialized in the SBCCOG’s Amended Master Service Agreement (MSA) with the SBFN vendor (see attachment [AMSA](#) pdf).

The SBFN, through its ISP (Internet Service Provider), offers carrier grade service at a competitive price compared to that of incumbent competitors. This has allowed the municipal agencies of the South Bay and participating anchor organizations to dramatically increase their service levels (from less than 1 Gbps to as much as 10 Gbps) and save money. The network access to the web is served by two world-class data centers located in El Segundo and Hawthorne, respectively.

Expansion of the SBFN offers opportunities to address underserved and disadvantaged households as well as commercial businesses at a low incremental cost and in a short time period. The SBFN (as a public asset) is positioned to address digital equity faster and more affordably than starting from scratch.

Project Area

The South Bay includes pockets of special need that have been identified as underserved broadband areas of the sub-region (see attachment [“Digital Equity Project: Where and Why”](#) pdf). This RFP seeks to fully understand the access issues and demand opportunities within the identified communities of Carson, Gardena, Hawthorne, and the West Athens-Westmont area of Unincorporated Los Angeles County.

Technical Approach

Proposers’ submissions should include participation in a kickoff meeting, monthly Project Team’s Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meetings, SBCCOG-specific meetings that may include SBCCOG’s Working Groups, Steering Committee, and Board meetings (minimum of 6).

Submissions should describe any subcontractors and include each firm’s qualifications to complete the proposed work plan for each task including capacity, history, and experience delivering proposed work products.

Proposers are encouraged to submit proposals organized by tasks that can be produced within the budget proposed. Each section should include a narrative describing the approach, methodology, resources, etc.; list of deliverables that will be produced for the Task; budget for each Task; assigned personnel and number of hours to complete each Task; and a timeline for deliverables identified in each Task. Proposal sections should address:

- A. Approach and Methodology: Describe the proposed approach in terms of methods, process, analyses, and data.
- B. Given the diversity of skills and expertise, proposers may submit proposals that provide for a partnership or collaboration between firms.

- C. Scope of Work + Deliverables: Detail the specific tasks that will realize the proposed approach.
- D. Budget
- E. Schedule
- F. Qualifications

In addition, all proposals must include a project summary spreadsheet by Tasks that describes task budgets, deliverables, and overall project schedule/timeline, and total hours. Proposers should feel free to add or subtract tasks or suggest other deliverables to accomplish the project tasks' stated goals for achieving the Task's objectives.

SCOPE OF WORK

Develop a Digital Equity plan to provide minimum connectivity opportunities for 100 Mbps or better download and upload speeds across all of the targeted underserved areas of South Bay cities. Recommended expansions will provide guidance and design to reach both businesses and homes in an efficient and cost-effective way. Development of the plan will require the following tasks:

Task 1: Conduct a broadband Market Assessment

Task 2: Conduct Needs Assessment for Small & Micro-business Community

Task 3: Provide technical support to the SBCCOG who will conduct a Needs Assessment of the Disadvantaged Communities

Task 4: Working with SBCCOG jointly, develop an Inventory of municipal and public agency broadband assets through survey and stakeholder engagement

Task 5: Develop a "Gap" analysis and design a conceptual network plan for expansion of the SBFN into the identified underserved communities

Task 6: Create Conceptual Design with engineering details that will yield "shovel-ready" plans that local agencies can use towards SBFN expansion

Task 1: Market Assessment

Conduct a market analysis to identify the broadband providers (private and public) and services that are available in both the targeted communities and across the service area of the SBCCOG. The analysis will provide information that will describe providers' available broadband products and distinguish between carrier grade, business class as well as "best effort" with comparative details describing service levels, pricing, and speeds. Consultant will provide a memorandum that further refines the market assessment to categorize and describe the types of services, service levels, and products available to specific market segments including (but not limited to) residential, government, and business customers. The memorandum will also include the methodology and sources for the assessment. The resulting market data will inform the gap analysis as to the availability of broadband within underserved communities against those available across the South Bay.

Task 2: Needs Assessment for Small and Micro-business Community*

The Market Assessment Task 1. will inform the small and micro-business needs assessment of Task 2. The work of Task 2, conducted by the selected consultant, is envisioned as identification, outreach, engagement, and assessment of a core sample of small and micro-businesses within the South Bay communities. Engagement of stakeholders can take many forms including surveys, interviews, and possible workshops (no more than a maximum of ten (10) workshops). The goal of the stakeholder engagement is to gain an understanding from owners of small and micro-businesses about their current use, cost of broadband, digital technology, and a description of future broadband/technology needs. Work Products from Task 2 will uncover key information about the broadband and technology needs of the small and microbusiness community as well as price sensitivities for services to support their current and future needs.

* The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) defines a micro-business as a company with [at most nine employees](#), company owners included.

Task 3: Technical Assistance for Disadvantaged Communities (At Large) Needs Assessment

The SBCCOG will be responsible for identifying the broadband/technology needs across the four (4) identified disadvantaged and underserved communities of Hawthorne, Gardena, Carson, and West Athens-Westmont (unincorporated Los Angeles County). The published data show low rates of internet service adoption by residents. For this task, consultants will provide technical resources, capacity, and guidance to support the SBCCOG's efforts to verify and/or correct those published data. The goal of this task is to determine the accurate number of internet subscribers and their level of satisfaction; and the reasons for not subscribing as either service not offered, only poor service available, service not affordable, or a combination of these.

The needs assessment for this task conducted by the SBCCOG staff will include a representative sampling within the identified communities including (but not limited to) community anchor institutions, community-based organizations, homeowners' groups, and clients of the South Bay Workforce Investment Board and the Small Business Development Center at El Camino Community College. The consultant is envisioned to support this work. Examples of support may include (and are not limited to) materials for presentations, contact lists, informational handouts, etc.

Task 4: Inventory of Public & Private Assets

The SBCCOG staff along with the consultant will be responsible for identifying and creating an inventory of public and private broadband assets within the project's identified DAC communities. The publicly and privately owned assets including conduit, fiber, antennas, poles, towers and other types of infrastructure will be identified by the selected consultant with assistance from the SBCCOG staff to facilitate outreach to cities. The selected consultant will organize the infrastructure into a searchable geo-coded database to describe critical information/inputs (i.e., 24/7 access; available capacity; height; etc.) that will be used to determine usefulness for expanding broadband to and within the DACs. Additionally, the selected consultant will conduct a review and analysis of DAC local agency's General, Economic Development, Transportation and Capital Projects (local, state, and federal) plans. The deliverable product(s) will help identify strategic and cost-effective methods of deploying and expanding broadband in a planned, organized, and phased approach.

Task 5: Gap Analysis

The data collected in Tasks 1 through 4 will be used by the selected consultant to provide a “gap analysis” that reflects the data for supply and demand within the underserved communities. The findings will be summarized and mapped to describe, verify, and confirm access and/or lack thereof to the broadband market within the underserved communities and other areas of the SBCCOG’s service territory. Based on this gap analysis, the SBCCOG and selected consultant will be able to assess what role the SBFN can play in addressing and mitigating these broadband gaps.

Deliverables will also include review, analysis, and memo of what legal and operational structures should be considered by SBCCOG and others in the use of existing infrastructure, where public-private partnerships may be the best business model and/or where city-owned new-build would be advantageous for connecting and leveraging the SBFN to address and mitigate the discovered broadband “gaps.”

Task 6: Conceptual Design with Technical Engineering Details

The selected consultant team will use the information gleaned from Tasks 1-5 to enhance and refine the SBCCOG’s conceptual design maps for expansion of the SBFN into the identified DAC communities (see attachments: [“Conceptual SBFN Extensions into DAC Communities”](#) pdf). The initial conceptual network map describes new (potential) paths of approximately 37 miles of fiber (195,360 feet)—a number estimated by a “high-level” look at targeted DACs in proximity to the SBFN.

The selected consultant team will iterate the maps to produce refined maps that identify paths where SBFN network extensions should be built and/or leased to provide last mile fiber or wireless service (if required) for the targeted areas of the communities. The work product from the conceptual design will include a map illustrating all components of the outside plan network infrastructure, with alignments, sites, laterals, and connections. Geodata files will be provided with the design, along with right of way analysis and a review of construction standards and policies within the boundaries of the respective local agency. The results of the above assessments and gap analysis will ensure that the conceptual design is in line with the needs of the community.

SBCCOG will review and approve the conceptual design. The selected consultants will then provide a list of “shovel-ready” projects that include: high level engineering design, permitting packages, field construction drawings, preconstruction prep, and as-builts with budget estimates provided on a per foot basis; and for leased network segment options, detailed business costs, terms, and requirements will need to be provided. The final deliverables from this task will be organized for cities or local agencies to apply for future broadband construction funding opportunities.

Task 7: Final Report

All the above work products will be combined into a final report with Executive Summary in a narrative as well as PowerPoint format, documenting all the findings and analysis. The report will include recommendations on the best options for ensuring connectivity for the DACs and for enabling connectivity for the small and microbusinesses in the South Bay. The report will lay out strategies for SBCCOG to expand SBFN and community broadband initiatives to meet the needs of the South Bay community and apply for future broadband construction funding.

BUDGET

Proposals should be submitted with a detailed line-item budget by task and hours for delivering their proposed Scope of Work. The budget should be in a spreadsheet format and at a minimum include: staff assigned with title, hours per task and total hours, and hourly rate along with any additional costs such as travel. Sub-consultants must also be included. Upon selection, an agreed upon budget/deliverables will become an attachment to the final signed contract between the Proposer and the SBCCOG. Note: Total budget for the entire project is \$498,949.00 and the SBCCOG is anticipated to be funded for approximately 20% of the total budget.

SCHEDULE

The schedule should be planned based on the **estimated start date of March 15, 2023, and an end date of December 20, 2023**, for the delivery of the "Final Report". All Technical Consultant Invoices must be received by January 31, 2024.

QUALIFICATIONS

All proposals are required to submit their Team's qualifications. This information should include the following:

- Management Approach: A description of the firm's proposed project management and organizational approach.
- Summary of completed comparable projects. A list and short abstract of recent relevant experience for similar projects/services is encouraged.
- Team Qualifications: resumes of key personnel and the hours and role of each in the project. The project manager and contract administrator for the project should be identified with the time commitment and estimated total hours that they are contributing to this project, which should be reflected in the proposed budget.

References: Minimum of three and maximum of six references; a government or public agency reference is encouraged.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Proposers will be evaluated based on the criteria below:

Evaluation Criteria	Max. Possible Points	Points Earned	Comments
TECHNICAL APPROACH <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tasks & approach clearly described • Approach is creative & innovative • Project intent has been met 	30		
FIRMS: <u>Prime Consultant:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capability to perform the technical work required • Ability to allocate resources as needed to meet project schedule • Familiarly with public agencies • Experience with similar project of the same size and scope • Ability to explain technical tasks to non-technical audience <u>Sub-Consultant(s):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each sub provides unique service(s) to the team • Subs are fully capable of performing their tasks 	25		
PROJECT MANAGEMENT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasonable total number & distribution of hours • Qualifications of key individuals • Time commitment of key individuals 	25		
PROJECT COST <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Realistic cost for services to be performed • Allocation of cost to tasks & activities 	10		
SCHEDULE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total time allocated for each task is realistic • Sequence of each task is logical & feasible 	10		
TOTAL	100		

REVIEW AND EXCEPTIONS TO SBCCOG STANDARD CONTRACT

All proposals are required to download the SBCCOG Standard Contract for review and if any revisions are requested a mark-up **must be submitted** as part of their electronic submission as described below. The SBCCOG prefers to use its standard contract as a template. In advance of selecting a final proposer, the SBCCOG is interested in any exceptions or changes that a potential awardee might request to the basic contract template. All changes should be done in “tracking changes” and submitted as a “Word.doc” attachment to their firm’s electronic submission. Markup of standard contract does not count towards proposal page limit.

PROPOSAL CHECKLIST

Proposals shall be no more than 25 pages and submitted in the specified format as follows:

- Cover Letter – Provide the name, mailing address, telephone number, email address, title, and signature of the firm’s authority and a contact person for this procurement. Also include the office location if it is different than the mailing address.
- Technical Approach and Methodology
- Proposed Scope of Work with Deliverables
- Proposed Line-item Budget to include total cost and hours per task by assigned staff and total hours
- Breakout of hourly/billable rates for each member of the project team
- Schedule
- Project Team’s Qualification*
- References*
- Exceptions to South Bay Cities Council of Governments’ Standard Contract (in tracking changes)*

* Note: Exceptions to the SBCCOG Standard Contract as well as resumes and references are not counted towards the 25-page limit.)

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Proposals shall be submitted in electronic format. Deadline for receipt of all proposals is: **5 PM Pacific Time – Wednesday, February 22, 2023**

Please include:

Proposer Company

Contact Name + E-MAIL ADDRESS

Emailed proposals

Email submissions should be sent to:

Info@southbaycities.org Subject: LATA RFP Submission

All attachments must be print-ready (i.e., pdf).

No faxes will be accepted. All submissions will receive a confirmation email within 1 business day. If you do not receive a confirmation email for your proposal submission, please contact:

Aaron Baum at (310) 371-7222.

Proposals received after February 22, 2023, at 5 pm PST will be rejected. Requests for extensions to this time and date will not be granted. Proposals or unsolicited amendments to proposals received by the SBCCOG after the acceptance date will not be considered. The SBCCOG reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, or to negotiate separately (in any manner necessary) to serve the best interests of the SBCCOG. The SBCCOG will select the most qualified contractor and not necessarily the lowest bidder. The SBCCOG also retains the right to waive irregularities in the proposal.

The SBCCOG will not be responsible for any expenses incurred by a firm in preparing and submitting a proposal.

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