

AT A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE RAPPAHANNOCK COUNTY BROADBAND AUTHORITY HELD ON MONDAY, JUNE 7, 2021, AT 1:00 P.M. AT THE RAPPAHANNOCK COUNTY COURTHOUSE, 250 GAY STREET, WASHINGTON, VIRGINIA.

CALL TO ORDER

Acting Chair Donehey called the meeting to order at 1:00 P.M.

Authority Board Members present: Debbie P. Donehey; Christine Smith; I. Christopher Parrish, Keir A. Whitson and Ronald L. Frazier.

Others present: Garrey W. Curry, Jr., FOIA Officer¹; Margaret Bond, Secretary.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair. Donehey led attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance.

MOMENT OF SILENCE

Chair Donehey requested that attendees observe a moment of silence.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Chair Donehey introduced the Agenda for the Authority Board's approval and adoption. Referring to item C. Regular Agenda Items, 1. Request for Proposals², Mr. Frazier raised the question why the matter a Request for Proposals (RFP), rather than a Request for Information (RFI)? Vice Chair Smith requested a note in the record that the document in question should have been available earlier to allow the Board sufficient time to review and consider it.

Chair Donehey suggested the mater could be re-titled an RFI rather than and RFP. Mr. Parrish commented that if the Authority Board were short on time to get responses on County broadband plans from potential partners, why not finalize and publish an RFP now. Mr. Frazier pointed out that an RFI and an RFP were two separate animals. You wouldn't he said, show up at the point-to-point races with a mule. Mr. Parrish indicated that if Mr. Frazier showed at the race with a mule, he wouldn't bet on it. Mr. Frazier said he wouldn't never bet on a mule.

Mr. Whitson asked about upcoming deadlines for filing a VATI grant application. Chair Donehey advised the Authority Board that the VATI program would be open for application, starting June 17th and the Authority Board would need to have a partner to apply, so deadlines are tight. In this light, Mr. Whitson questioned the substantive difference between an RFI and an RFP? Mr. Frazier said an RFI was a solicitation for information only when the County was not sure what it wanted, whereas an RFP was more of a remedy for what the County already figured

¹ Mr. Curry is also Rappahannock County Administrator.

² A copy of this document appears at the end of these minutes as ATTACHMENT ONE.

what it needed to help the County put forward to pick a partner.

Vice Chair Smith reminded the Authority Board members that the recent representatives from the Virginia Association of Counties (VACO) and the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) had recommended Rappahannock County prepare an RFI and directed the Board to some templates for this document it could use. FOIA Officer Curry explained that the version of the document in question, which he had drafted over the previous weekend, was based on versions on the Virginia Commonwealth website for RFPs. The document in question was not subject to the Virginia Procurement Act. Chair Donehey explained that when you send out an RFI you can get information back from anyone who has an interest in broadband. An RFP takes it a level higher and sets boundaries for respondents to submit their responses. An RFP saves time because people who respond to an RFI may not be able to meet the requirements of an RFP.

Mr. Whitson reminded the Board members that they had already considered one potential partner, which was Shentel, who made a presentation to the Board at the last meeting. He also pointed out that at that meeting Todd Summers had suggested that, in light of this potential partner who was interested in preparing a County broadband plan, that the Board give other potential opportunities to respond as to how they would accomplish what Shentel had offered to do. It seemed to him at the end you have the same information. He wanted to know if the Board couldn't just change the title of the document and proceed with discussing it?

Mr. Frazier brought up his viewpoint that the County did not have a problem of lack of internet throughout the County. Rather, he said what is really needed is a map of where there are pockets of residents that are adequately served with an existing internet service provider and where there are pockets where no broadband service existed. We need, he said, a map with colors to show the different types of internet in the County and the different levels of service provided. Mr. Frazier said it appeared that the Broadband Authority was putting out the appearance that the whole County was an island of nothing—and in fact, the County has all kinds of service. He thought a fully-developed map of existing service would show where there were white spots of no service and those would be the areas which would be subject of an RFI. But instead, he said, the County was saying: Here we have a problem and we want you to fix it. If, he said, I told Mr. Parrish I wanted a truck, he would have to have an idea of what kind of truck I wanted. If I went to a dealer and said the same thing, they would try and sell me the truck they could make the most money off of – and that might be twice as much truck as I really needed. Mr. Frazier expressed his concern that just putting out an RFI wouldn't result in the Broadband Authority Board being able to identify a suitable ISP partner because it didn't know what specifically what it wanted. He suggested the Board cut and paste the document it was considering and make an RFI out of it. Vice Chair Smith pointed out that the County needed to be able to identify such a partner by September, not July. Part of what DHCD offered was a kind of “speed dating” from July to September to help find a partner by the time of the September grant application deadline. She was concerned the Authority Board not railroad something through that was not really what intended to do.

Mr. Parrish suggested the Board adopt the Agenda and then the Authority could discuss whether to title the document an RFI or RFP when it got to that section of the Agenda. He then moved to leave the word “Proposals” on the Agenda [**C. Regular Agenda Items** 1. Request for

Proposals] and amend it with “and Information”. That way, he said, all ideas would be open for the Authority Board to talk about and both it would not box itself into a corner. Ms. Frazier seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Aye: Donehey, Parrish, Frazier, Whitson.

Nay: Smith

Abstain:

PUBLIC COMMENT

Page Glennie – Jackson District. Thanked the Authority Board for proving the next points he was about to make. He strongly recommended the Board release the RFP in question. He said (the document in question) has an end goal to find a partner to produce a solution (for broadband) in Rappahannock County. He asked when the strategy for cost of this approach ever made public? The requirements of the RFP, in his opinion, were unrealistic. He asked if anyone at the meeting thought the County could execute a plan to achieve 100 Mbps up and 100 Mbps down in 18 months in Rappahannock County? He also pointed out the RFP had no source selection criteria, so an offeror would not know how it was going to be judged on for selection.

Mr. Glennie pointed out that the VATI guidelines requires an ISP to identify each and every home, business, its location, and its services. How is that going to be possible, he asked. You would think, he said, that the RFP would have said that the GIS data that the County just paid for, for emergency response dispatch system would have been provided, or even what some were some of the results that came out of the Broadband Committee, which, he said, sat on its hands for three years.

This (the document in question), according to Mr. Glennie, is a statement of objective acquisition. He said from his work at DHS he saw many statements of objective acquisitions. He could not remember a single one that was successful. And that was with people with far more resources and acquisition experience than the members of the Authority Board have. The problem with them is that the Authority Board doesn't know what it is buying. That is what the Board is trying to find out.

He continued with indicating inconsistencies with the VATI guidelines. The speeds, for example, he said only require 25 Mbps down and 3 Mbps up for this phase of the grant. It was his opinion that the Board had already missed the VATI deadlines. He asked the Board if it expected a contractor, by September at their (sic) own cost to locate every resident, business is and find out what broadband resources they have? He also pointed out that under VATI guidelines, satellite service does not count (as served).

Mr. Glennie then referred to the Shentel proposal previously presented to the Authority Board, which he identified as an RDOF plan. By the VATI guidelines this area is excluded from consideration for a grant. This adds concerns, he said, that if the County already has a partner, does the County really have an open competition? Mr. Glennie said he could find a whole bunch of procurement lawyers that say you don't. It's clear, he said that the Board doesn't know what it needed to buy. He said it should be using the RFI template that was provided by Virginia

Commonwealth Connect. He said it would get the Board the information that it needed and the Board could add to that what information it already has, since the County likes to point out it is not a publicly available GIS county. He expressed his opinion that the likelihood the Authority Board could meet all the VATI application requirements by the September deadline was very very small. He said he was not buying the emergency: need -to-do-it-today thing, because, he said, you have already missed it, because the Broadband Committee sat on it for three years when they could have been collecting this type of information.

Rob Yowell – Piedmont District. He identified his and his father’s business as a computer repair company and said they were asked questions about internet on a weekly basis. He acknowledged that a lot of what Mr. Glennie, the previous speaker, said was correct. He agreed the 100 Mbps upload and 100 Mbps download is completely unrealistic for a rural area. He said 10-25 Mbps is probably a realistic goal to start with. In his opinion trying to achieve 100 Mbps speeds was like taking a goal post out and sticking it in another country.

He pointed out the document in question refers to trying to create a “future-proof” system. However, Mr. Yowell said, the technology you use today is obsolete tomorrow. So, that statement did not make sense to him.

Mr. Yowell expressed his concern that the document seemed to indicate the County was looking to partner with one or two existing ISPs and would be exclusive to them (sic). He did not think this plan was the best way to go, because he thought the County needed to encourage multiple partners or businesses to come in and cover the County. He also emphasized that the County already has a local business providing broadband service that would be sidelined because of the 100/100 Mbps requirements. He said he understood why the Authority Board wanted to “jump on the VATI wagon” to get the money, but he thought the effort was rushed. He suggested the document be broken down in a longer meeting.

Steve Hensley – Castleton. Mr. Hensley expressed his concern over the potential costs of the plans under discussion. He said he had a lot of good and bad experience with cost share arrangements in conservation practices on the farm. He questioned where the County’s 20% share of the costs for a broadband system was going to come from.

Mr. Hensley expressed further concerns about how the County was going to provide broadband service to all the homes. He asked if the plans were to bury fiber optic cable or other. He said if you try and build a fence in this County, the fence companies charge extra for this County because of the existence a lot of rock under the surface. He pointed out that the conservation monies don’t pay extra for Rappahannock County.

Mr. Hensley next referred to the plan to provide broadband service to every home. He said he had spent years designing power lines through rural southside Virginia. He said he encountered a few people that welcomed him with open arms and at other residences he was chased off with guns – even though he was standing on the power company’s right of way, legally. In opinion, (accessing every home for broadband service) was not going to be an easy thing to get done. He recommended the Authority Board look at right of way access issues carefully.

In conclusion, Mr. Hensley asked whether County taxes would have to go up to pay for these broadband plans? He said for over the past year he had been working out of his home. Over the years, he said, he had used a variety of phone services, starting with dial up, moving to AirCard³, to satellite, to MoFi⁴ cellular system. In all of them you go with the service they offer. Initially, he said, these systems, he said, work great until a lot of other people get on, and it bogs down and your speeds slow up and the companies give you the run around about fixing it. We have always, he continued, been able to figure out work arounds for these issues for a year or three and then move on.

Bob Ryan – Stonewall District. Over the past year with the pandemic, the needs have been great, especially in education. He pointed out that broadband and cellular service are two different things. He said he has broadband at his home. However, if he goes 100 yards down the driveway, there is no cellular service, but he can talk to the Authority Board meeting via his internet. Mr. Ryan reiterated that broadband service is provided by a variety of ISPs from Verizon, Comcast, Shentel, to Piedmont Broadband. He urged the Authority Board to address the need for broadband (in the County), particularly for education as soon as possible and to use a variety of methods (sic). Right now, he said, we have a patchwork of providers. He urged the Authority Board to not enter into an exclusive arrangement with one of the major companies. He thought bringing broadband to Rappahannock County should not be done with a monopoly. He suggested the Board set requirements for broadband companies such as (1) that they work as cooperatively as possible to bring needed broadband to as many people as possible and (2) that it not be controlled some monopoly going forward.

Mr. Ryan informed the meeting that he had worked with Piedmont Broadband and in the future he thought the County could make a wide area wireless broadband system to reach as many communities and households that are not served now. That doesn't mean, he concluded, that we have to put in 10-15 huge antennas that will take five to six years to install. Piedmont Broadband and Virginia Broadband in Culpeper County are serving many many people with modest towers.

There were no further requests to speak. Chair Donehey closed the Public Comment session.

REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS

Request for Proposals and Information

Chair Donehey opened the meeting for discussion of the RFP and RFI. She reiterated that an RFI is just a notice to everyone asking them to identify themselves and describe what they have to offer the County for a broadband plan. She asked Mr. Frazier what he would see beyond this for the RFI? Mr. Frazier pointed out that this approach would be a good one to help meet the County's broadband needs, but that the problem at this juncture was that the County didn't know what, exactly, were its needs. We don't know what we don't know, he opined. He said it was not economically feasible to ask an ISP to come in and shotgun broadband all over the County.

³ AirCard: a wireless modem that connects mobile devices to the internet through cellular networks.

⁴ MoFi stands for mobile fidelity. MoFi routers provide a local WiFi and ethernet LAN network, and support tethering to a cellular hotspot or USB modem to share cellular connection. MoFi also supports direct USB tethering to Android phones and was the first router to support direct iOS smartphone tethering.

That's why, he emphasized, the ISPs are not here now. He reminded the Board that even if it were considering using state or federal funds for a broadband plan, there really wasn't any such thing as "free money." The Board, he said, needed to be very circumspect as to how it invested any monies it obtained, regardless of the pot it came from.

He suggested the Board could shape the RFI to meet the County's specific needs. However, he didn't think the Board really knew what these needs are. Mr. Frazier liked the idea that an RFI would find out who was interested in bringing broadband to the County and what they could offer. That, he said, was what an RFI would do.

Mr. Curry interjected that as of last meeting no one was stepping forward to do anything so he undertook to develop the RFP as it looked like what the Board wanted. He welcomed the Board to take what he had prepared and change it to meet what the Board thought it needed. He pointed out that the RFP as drafted called for 100/100 Mbps because that was what the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) called for. He reminded the Board that ARPA put \$7 billion on the table, and \$1.4 million of which was coming to Rappahannock County, and could be used for public utilities and broadband.

Mr. Frazier asked if anyone had seen the RFP draft and Mr. Curry said he has sent it to Chair Donehey. Mr. Frazier objected to the Board's doing business without full participation of all the members. Chair Donehey reminded him that the objective of the meeting today was to see if there was something that the Board agreed could be sent out soon or finalize it today or would work on at another meeting. She said that if anyone who had reviewed the draft after she had sent it out to Board members had problems with it they could have indicated by email.

Vice Chair Smith objected to the practice of doing public business by email because that was not the Board members working together. She pointed out that Mr. Curry doesn't work for the Authority Board, but he went out of his way to draft the RFP. However, she said, the RFP was not what the Board agreed to and was not the template of a document that the experts the Board had heard from previously recommended.

Mr. Whitson thought that sending out the document a week in advance of the Authority Board meeting so that members could review and comment on it knowledgeably at the meeting was logical to help discussion. Vice Chair Smith stated she had reviewed the document and had also reviewed her notes of what the speakers from VACO said, along with information on RFIs from the Virginia Commonwealth Connect website. She concluded the document in question was not the document she wanted to circulate. Mr. Frazier agreed with Vice Chair Smith's position that the Board should not be conducting business by email among members. He said he preferred that the Board members meet in person to do business. Chair Donehey pointed out that there had not been enough days to call away a meeting of the Board sooner because of FOIA notice requirements. She said she was fine looking at the document as an RFI not an RFP in order to move toward the Board's objectives.

The Board members engaged in discussion of templates from Virginia Commonwealth Connect for RFIs. Chair Donehey pointed out that much of the introductory information contained in the document would be the same whether the document were called an RFI or an RFP. Mr. Whitson

directed attention to a section at the bottom of page two, referring to the partnership desired outcome, that would serve the same as a solicitation of interest that would go out in an RFI. Chair Donehey reminded the Authority Board that this desired outcome was one of the goals of the Broadband Committee with its mission statement calling for universal broadband to 95% of households and businesses in the County.

At Vice Chair Smith's request, Mr. Curry pulled up the Commonwealth Connect's template for an RFI. Vice Chair Smith pointed out a number of differences between the template and the document in question. After some discussion of miscellaneous provisions in the boilerplate language of the template, Mr. Curry pointed out that each of the provisions noted were required to be in public contracts for goods and services per the Virginia Procurement Act. Vice Chair Smith asked if these provisions were required by the Act, why didn't the document the Board was considering include them. Mr. Curry explained because the Board was not buying goods or services. It would be different process, he said, if the Authority Board wanted to buy goods and own them.

Chair Donehey asked Margaret Bond if the Broadband Committee had considered an RFI or RFP previously. Ms. Bond explained that the Committee had considered a draft of a two-phased RFP. The first phase of this RFP was a concept plan phase in which interested ISPs would submit their concept of how to implement universal broadband in the County. The second phase would commence when the County selected a plan and ISP partner from the respondents to undertake the design and execution phase. However, she noted that that RFP, as drafted, clearly stated the County was not obligated to proceed to the second phase, if it chose not to do so.

Chair Donehey, remarking on the time (1:48 pm) and the fact the Authority Board members had another meeting to attend at 2 pm. She indicated the RFP template from Commonwealth Connect was not what the Board wanted because it was not buying anything. She suggested the Board should work to come up with a simpler document. Vice Chair Smith continued her objection to Board members exchanging emails to come up with a new draft, versus meeting and discussion the contents in a public meeting. Mr. Parrish suggested conducting business this way would result in an awful lot of meetings. He recapped what the Authority Board got out of the meeting:

- That the Board had been advised it was not wise to have an exclusive ISP partner,
- That it was unrealistic to expect a broadband plan achieving 100/100 Mbps, but otherwise the Board's hands were tied because of the ARPA requirements,
- That the Board was cautioned that it could go to a lot of time, money, and expense only to find its plans are outdated with new technology,
- That it made sense for the mission/vision statement Vice Chair Smith agreed to work on at the last Authority Board meeting be broad and simple and not include goals that are unobtainable.
- That it looked as if the Board would have to have another meeting to work on the RFI.

Mr. Frazier suggested the Board appoint a committee of two members to work on the RFI for the and continue the meeting for a few days.

Chair Donehey, after canvassing Board members, suggested the meeting be continued to Friday, June 11th at 5 pm at the County Courthouse.

Mr. Parrish then moved to continue the Authority Board meeting to Friday, June 11th at 5 pm in the County Courthouse. Vice Chair Smith seconded it. The motion carried unanimously.

Aye: Donehey, Parrish, Frazier, Whitson, Smith.

Nay:

Abstain:

The meeting concluded at 1:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Margaret Bond, Scribe

DRAFT

ATTACHMENT ONE



**RAPPAHANNOCK COUNTY
BROADBAND AUTHORITY**

3 Library Road - P.O. Box 519

Washington, Virginia 22747-0519

Phone: (540) 675-5330 Fax: (540) 675-5331

www.rappahannockcountyva.gov

Debbie P. Donehey, Chair

Christine Smith, Vice Chair

Ronald L. Frazier

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

RFP: RCBA #2021-01

PARTNERSHIP FOR INTERNET CONNECTIVITY IN RAPPAHANNOCK COUNTY

ISSUED: May XX, 2021

The Rappahannock County Broadband Authority (RCBA) will accept responses **until 4:00PM EST on June 30, 2020**, in the Rappahannock County Administration Office located at 3 Library Road Washington, Virginia 22747.

INQUIRIES: Address questions related to this RFP to County Administrator, Garrey W. Curry, Jr., who will compile questions and coordinate with the RCBA (gwcurry@rappahannockcountyva.gov). Contact initiated by an offeror concerning this RFP with any other County or RCBA representative, not expressly authorized elsewhere in this document, is prohibited. Any such unauthorized contact may result in disqualification of the offeror from this transaction.

PLEASE COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION:

Complete Legal Name of Firm (Offeror): _____

Address: _____

Federal Tax ID Number: _____

Signature of Authorized Representative: _____

Printed Name & Title: _____

Please provide the primary contact person for questions relative to this project:

Contact Name & Title: _____

Phone: _____ **E-mail:** _____

The offeror has the sole responsibility to identify and describe the services it proposes. Offerors should take into account that not only the content but also the form and clarity of their response. If the Authority cannot determine what is being proposed, it is likely to reject the response. All information should be submitted in an organized, easy-to-understand manner. The right is reserved, as the interest of the Authority requires, to revise this document prior to the due date and postpone the due date. Such revisions will be announced by written addenda. The Authority will reject proposals received after the date and time of closing and return them to the offeror unopened. Timely submission of proposals is the sole responsibility of the offeror. The RCBA reserves the right to reject any and all proposals, to waive informalities, and to negotiate with offeror(s). If the County Administration office is closed on the date proposals are due, the deadline will be extended to the same time on the next business day.

RETURN THIS PAGE WITH RESPONSE

DRAFT

I. PURPOSE

The RCBA is seeking one or more Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to partner with to expand the availability of broadband internet connectivity in Rappahannock County. The need for such a partnership overtly recognizes that the density of housing units in Rappahannock County is generally considered too sparse to support broadband deployment using only typically available commercial investments.

It is anticipated that the partnerships resulting from this RFP process will lead to one or more seamless joint efforts to seek all forms of available government and non-government funding to bridge the gap between commercially available investment (from a provider/Offeror) and what is needed to actually deploy broadband service to 95% of households in Rappahannock County.

One such form of government funding is the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development's (DHCD) Virginia Telecommunication Initiative (VATI) Grant opportunity for FY2022. This funding opportunity practically requires a public-private partnership. VATI Guidelines are available on the DHCD VATI webpage that can be accessed via: <https://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/vati>. Critical VATI deadlines include: Notice of Application due on July 27, 2021; Applications due on September 14, 2021.

II. COUNTY BACKGROUND

Rappahannock County is located in the northern piedmont area of Virginia in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The County serves an area of 267 square miles with a population of approximately 7,300. Shenandoah National Park (SNP) occupies nearly 50 square miles of the western most portion of the county within which broadband services are not required, leaving the populated area at 217 square miles with a net density of 33.7 persons per square mile. The U.S. Census Bureau reported that there were approximately 3,131 households in the county in 2017 with an associated density of 14.4 households per square mile. The Town of Washington is the only incorporated town in Rappahannock County and has a population of under 150. There are five other "village areas" of varying household and business density including Amisville, Chester Gap, Flint Hill, Sperryville, and Woodville. The county does not have a publicly facing GIS system from which the public and businesses are able to analyze the population density. Given the rural character of the Rappahannock County landscape, many households are served by very long private driveways.

Rappahannock County is bordered to the northwest by Warren County, the northeast by Fauquier County, the southeast by Culpeper County, the south by Madison County, and the west by Page County. Warren County and Page County lie on the western side (opposite side) of the blue ridge mountains. The topography in Rappahannock County is varied ranging from 360 to 3,720 feet above mean sea level. The lowest point in the county is where the Rappahannock River crosses into Culpeper County. The highest point is along the top of the Blue Ridge Mountains along the border with Page County in the SNP.

Portions of Rappahannock County are currently served by varying degrees of terrestrial based internet connectivity by incumbent broadband providers either with DSL, wireless, coaxial, or fiber; however, large portions of the county are not covered by reliable, affordable broadband. In 2021, the Rappahannock County Board of Supervisors created the Rappahannock County Broadband Authority (RCBA), an independent political subdivision of the Commonwealth of Virginia under the Virginia Wireless Service Authorities Act, in order to address the issue of providing high speed and affordable broadband service to citizens using partnerships not inherently available to the local county government.

III. PARTNERSHIP/DESIRED OUTCOME

As noted, the RCBA intends to partner with one or more private sector broadband service providers to expand the availability of broadband internet connection in Rappahannock County. The desired outcome of the partnership(s) is a joint effort to seek all forms of available government and non-government funding to bridge the gap between commercially available investment and what is needed to actually deploy broadband service to 95% of households (universal broadband service) in Rappahannock County. The RCBA has a preference to enter into a partnership with a single partner for the entire county, but reserves the right to enter into geographically distinct partnerships dividing the county into sub-parts, which would be ultimately served by different partners.

The potential availability of state, federal, and non-governmental funding to supplement the deployment of broadband internet connectivity in the wake of the global pandemic is unprecedented with trillions of dollars in pandemic relief appropriated by the federal government, of which billions are expected to be available for various pandemic related needs in the Commonwealth of Virginia, including the expansion of Broadband. The Governor of Virginia recently issued a release signaling that he intends to invest heavily in the expansion of broadband internet connectivity using these funds and effectively shorten his 10-year goal for statewide broadband deployment to an 18-month period.

Recognizing the unprecedented pandemic investment opportunity, the RCBA desires to provide broadband internet connectivity to the citizens and businesses in Rappahannock County that meet the speed requirements stated in the recently released interim final rule for the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), **which are 100 mbps download and 100 mbps upload** (upload could possibly be reduced if there is an upgrade path). We presume that this practically requires the installation of optical fiber to the premises, but other innovative technical solutions capable of meeting the technical requirements found in the interim final rule will be considered. Meeting this standard will provide future proof service and allow the RCBA to invest ARPA funds received by Rappahannock County and other funds that have the same technical service requirement.

Most of the available government and non-government funding resources provide investment only for “unserved” or “underserved” areas and it is therefore a core intent for potential partners (offerors) to **identify existing structures already served and determine those that are unserved or underserved:**

- Research, understand, and explore the technical requirements involved in various available funding support opportunities (available now or in the future) including but not limited to the definition of “unserved” and “underserved” as it applies to households and areas eligible to receive grant funding (from various grant sources).
- Conduct a needs assessment including an “on-the-ground” defensible survey of the county to identify structures (households, businesses, other) and the method through which they can currently access broadband internet connectivity.
- Compare the results of the technical requirements and standards with the on-the-ground survey to definitively identify “unserved” and “underserved” structures as grouping may vary from funding opportunity to funding opportunity that may have different technical standards.

Following the research needed to understand the areas of the county that are eligible to receive outside funding, explore and **fully identify funding needs:**

- Identify existing services and infrastructure that can be leveraged to most efficiently provide universal broadband service.

- Develop a broadband internet connectivity deployment plan that provides universal broadband service at the referenced speeds to the citizens and businesses of Rappahannock County. The deployment plan shall include deployment milestones covering all aspects of a project and ending with universal broadband service.
- Determine the capital investment needed to complete the deployment plan; the capital recovery that is expected to be supported by customer revenue; and the supplemental capital that must be sought from federal, state, local, and non-governmental agencies to close the capital funding gap.
- **Lead** the process to assemble broader partnerships (as necessary)
- **Lead** the process to apply for outside funding including VATI funds before their respective application deadlines.

Following the identification of funding needs and the application and receipt of necessary funds, **own and deploy the broadband system.**

IV. Requested Information:

Responses to this RFP must include:

1. Summary of current broadband services provided and locations your organization currently serves including the number of years in the telecom industry.
2. Listing and copies of existing partnership agreements with other local governments in Virginia and evidence showing progress toward meeting the intent of those agreements.
3. Technology proposed to deliver universal broadband as defined herein.
4. Timeline of proposed actions including those expressed as desired herein and expressly including actions necessary to jointly submit the necessary documents for the FY2022 VATI program.
5. Proposed partnership agreement including guarantees that will be offered in exchange for the investment of federal, state, local, and non-governmental funds through the RCBA.
6. A listing of support needed from the RCBA to meet the expressed Desired Outcome. Offeror must be prepared to carry nearly all of the burden to prepare complete and approvable grant documents with limited support from the RCBA.
7. List of company principals who will be assigned to the project and be responsible for overall development and implementation.
8. Evidence of financial capacity to deliver the Desired Outcome with levels of commercial capital necessary for deployment in the form of guaranteed funding put up as “grant match” together with RCBA funds totaling an amount necessary to have a competitive and realistic opportunity to receive federal, state, and non-governmental funds.

V. Submissions and Timeline

Submit requested information and all other information Offeror deems pertinent (creative ideas, recommended approaches, strategies, advice, etc.). RCBA seeks input in any form deemed appropriate by the offeror, including but not limited to white papers, lessons learned, etc. All submission should be made in printed form with a soft copy in portable document format (PDF).

Submissions are due by the date and time listed on the cover page of this RFP. If not hand delivered to the location listed on the cover page of this RFP, they may be mailed with the following clearly labeled on an outer envelope or box: “RFP RCBA #2021-01” to the attention of:

Rappahannock County Broadband Authority
C/O Garrey W. Curry, Jr., County Administrator

D R A F T

Rappahannock County, Virginia
3 Library Road
PO Box 519
Washington, VA 22747

VI. Disclaimer

Be advised. This is not a purchase of goods or services. This is an expression of interest for potential partners who are seeking a partnership with a local broadband authority in such a way as to provide non-commercial investment necessary to implement a privately held broadband internet connectivity system as expressed herein within Rappahannock County that would otherwise not be commercially viable if not for the non-commercial investment.

Any materials submitted in response to this RFI shall be the sole property of the RCBA.