



County of Inyo Request for Proposals (RFP)

Furnace Creek USDA BTA Last-Mile Design Project

To create shovel-ready, last-mile, detailed network engineering designs for broadband Internet service in the exceptionally rural area of Furnace Creek, California.

Submit Proposals to:

*County of Inyo, Clerk of the Board
P.O. Drawer N
224 North Edwards Street
Independence, CA 93526
Attn: RFP-2024-USDA-BTA-Furnace-Creek-Design*

Date Released:

June 11, 2024

Submittal Deadline:

July 16, 2024

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I. Introduction

Furnace Creek USDA RD BTA Grant Funded Last-Mile Design Project

The County of Inyo is soliciting proposals from firms with demonstrated experience in designing fiber-optic network solutions to develop and deliver detailed engineering design plans to be used for future construction projects of high-speed, last-mile broadband infrastructure to communities, households, and businesses in the area.

This project, funded by a US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development (RD) Broadband Technical Assistance (BTA) grant, is intended to create shovel-ready, last-mile, detailed network engineering designs for broadband Internet service in the exceptionally rural area of Furnace Creek, California. Our project area includes the residential area for Death Valley National Park Service (NPS) employees at Park Village at Cow Creek, located about 4 miles north of Furnace Creek, to the resort about 1 mile south-southeast of Furnace Creek.

This project is for pre-construction work only, as the USDA RD BTA Grant will not fund any construction.

The amount budgeted for this work is \$93,500, payable to the contractor after reimbursement from USDA RD.

II. Background

The County of Inyo is a Governmental Organization

Inyo County, California was organized in 1866 from land set aside from Mono and Tulare Counties. The County was originally named Coso County, and the town of Independence is designated as the County seat. The County is characterized as rural and frontier and is in the central-eastern part of the state. At 10,227 square miles, Inyo County is geographically the second largest county in California. The governmental agency was organized, in part, to provide safety and services to its population.

According to 2020 census information, the population of Inyo County is 19,016, up from 18,546 in the 2010 census. Census data also indicates 7,954 Inyo County households in 2020.

While the County seat is located in Independence, the largest population center of the County is approximately 45 miles to the north in Bishop, California. The City of Bishop is the County's only incorporated city and covers an area of approximately two-square miles with a population of nearly 4,000 residents. Bishop and its immediate suburbs host a population of approximately 12,000.

The County of Inyo governmental organization is the County's largest employer with approximately 460 employees.



Description of the current Internet service in Inyo County

The successful completion of the ambitious Digital 395 project in late 2013 that was funded by the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act project equipped the Owens Valley with a middle-mile broadband network capable of providing practically limitless broadband capacity for generations. While

the Digital 395 network has the potential to deliver high-speed broadband Internet service to most of the residents and businesses in Inyo County, many of our population centers are very remote and too small to provide a reliable return on investment for an Internet Service Provider (ISP), offering very little Incentive for ISPs to construct and operate wireline broadband Internet networks in those areas.

A large portion of our County is several miles from the Digital 395 middle-mile network and is essentially unserved by wireline Internet Service Providers. These rural areas require significant investment in middle-mile network infrastructure to support last-mile broadband Internet service. Death Valley, which includes Furnace Creek, is one of the areas in the County with no wireline broadband Internet service.

Purpose of the Furnace Creek Last-Mile Design Project

The purpose of this project is to develop a creative and flexible, last-mile Internet service solution design for the Furnace Creek area that will enable community-based cooperatives to provide faster, more reliable Internet service to that area until the State's middle-mile network is constructed in the region in 2025 or 2026. Following the completion of the network engineering designs, we plan to seek funding for the construction of the last-mile infrastructure, making it more feasible for Internet service providers to deliver services in this area. We also expect that this creative and flexible approach to designing and constructing last-mile network infrastructure will be used as a model for internet connectivity solutions in other very remote and exceptionally rural areas in our County.

The designs must support 100Mbps symmetrical broadband Internet service, preferably 1Gbps symmetrical or better.

III. Project Scope of Work

Project Deliverables

Shovel-ready, last-mile detailed engineering designs that can be used by any reasonably capable and qualified network construction company to construct last-mile fiber-to-the-premise network infrastructure.

- Provide detailed, shovel-ready, engineering designs for last-mile network infrastructure that is capable of providing 100Mbps symmetrical broadband internet service simultaneously to every premise in the project area--preferably 1Gbps symmetrical service.
- Engineering designs should include network infrastructure connections from the future State-owned, open-access middle-mile network¹ along CA-190.
- Engineering designs should include last-mile service infrastructure to all eligible locations in the project area.
- Engineering designs should allow for multiple Internet service connections for redundancy.
- Describe in detail how to transition this network from an interim service provider solution to Internet service delivered through the future State-owned, middle-mile network.

¹ The State's Middle-Mile Broadband Network (MMBN) will consist of the current Digital 395 open-access middle-mile network, as well as new construction. Information on the future MMBN can be found at <https://middle-mile-broadband-initiative.cdt.ca.gov/pages/statewide-middle-mile-network-map> and an ArcGIS map of the planned network can be found at <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/e2540ace2ac248ee8c3350aa39395342>.

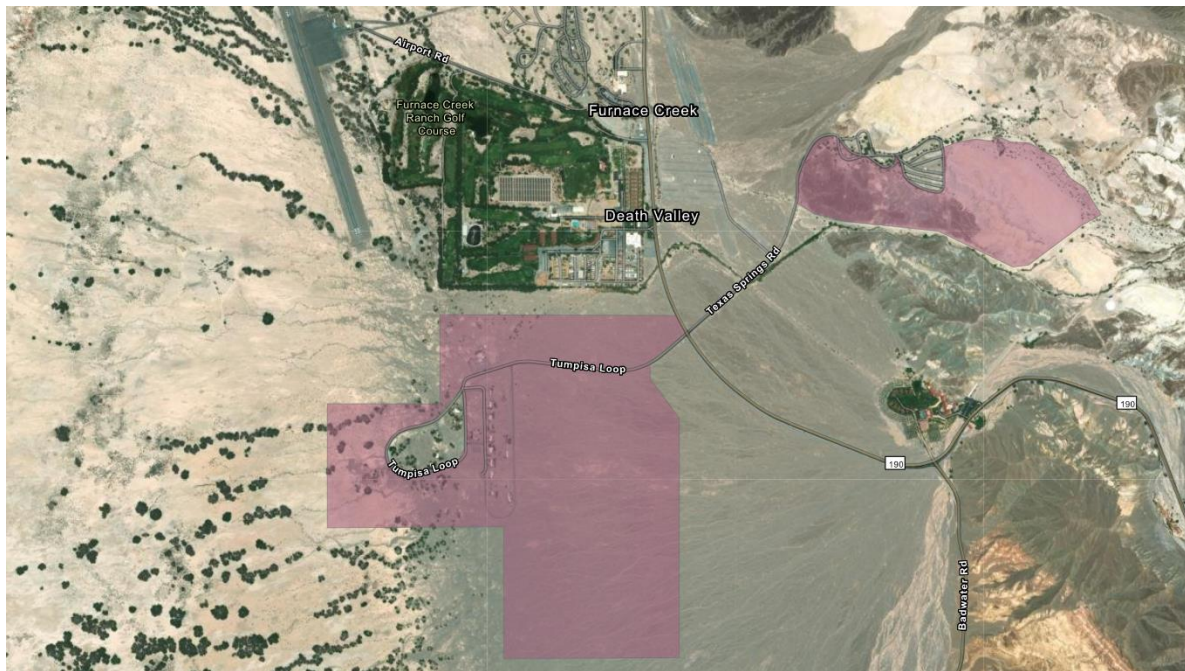
- Describe the networking technology and equipment proposed for both the potential network operator and the subscriber.
- Describe any critical engineering design issues associated with the design project.
- Describe any additional equipment needed to support the proposed solution that is not included as part of the proposed solution.
- Describe any critical environmental issues associated with the project and how to address these.
- Describe any additional steps beyond the solution being proposed that could reduce costs and shorten future construction timelines.
- Coordinate with the appropriate County Departments regarding design routes and potential environmental or permitting challenges. Ensure that the project design documents account for environmental clearance and any required regulatory agency permits.
- Designs must comply with: Federal laws; State laws; local laws; rules and regulations of governing utility districts; and rules and regulations of other authorities with jurisdiction over the construction of network infrastructure.
- Deliver the final designs in high-resolution PDF format and provide a shapefile for the project area.
- All deliverables for this project must be submitted to the County of Inyo before September 2025.

Census Block List

The Furnace Creek project area includes the following census blocks:

- 060270008001027 Block 1027 (partial, see below)
- 060270008001029 Block 1029
- 060270008001030 Block 1030
- 060270008001031 Block 1031
- 060270008001032 Block 1032
- 060270008001034 Block 1034
- 060270008001035 Block 1035
- 060270008001037 Block 1037
- 060270008001038 Block 1038
- 060270008001039 Block 1039
- 060270008001044 Block 1044
- 060270008001074 Block 1074
- 060270008001075 Block 1075
- 060270008001347 Block 1347
- 060270008001348 Block 1348
- 060270008001349 Block 1349
- 060270008001350 Block 1350

This project area does not include the portion of Block 1027 that is adjacent to Block 1032, the Texas Springs Campground. California Internet was the CAF2 auction winner for that portion of Block 1027. The project area also does not include Block 1043, also won by California Internet in the CAF2 auction, or Block 1353, which is fully encircled by Block 1043. Blocks 1043 and 1353 are not in the list above. The excluded portion of Block 1027 as well as the excluded Blocks 1043 and 1353 are indicated in mauve in the image below for reference.



IV. County Information and Responsibilities

Administrative Information

The County of Inyo through the Office of the County Administrator is sponsoring this project, and the Regional Broadband Coordinator is managing the project. Respondents are specifically instructed to not contact any elected officials or other County employees for meetings, conferences or discussions related to this RFP. Unauthorized contact with elected officials or County personnel may result in rejection of the respondent's RFP response.

Inquiries and County Project Contact

County of Inyo, CAO – Regional Broadband Coordinator
1360 N. Main Street
Bishop, California 93514

Email: sarmstrong@inyocounty.us

All inquiries should be directed in writing via email to Scott Armstrong, Regional Broadband Coordinator, County of Inyo. The closing time for inquiries related to this RFP is *July 12, 2024, 4:30 p.m.* All inquiries and the associated County responses will be posted on the County website. Interested parties are cautioned that the opportunity to obtain additional information should not be viewed as a sales presentation opportunity.

Rights of the County

The County retains sole discretion regarding every aspect of the RFP evaluation and selection process. The County reserves the right to, but is not limited to:

- Accept other than lowest offer
- Reject any or all responses without cause
- Reject all responses and seek new responses when such action is judged to be in the best interest of the County
- Request and receive additional information as the County believes is necessary, and disqualify any respondent and reject any responses for failure to promptly provide such additional information
- Request additional information or clarification from respondents, or allow corrections of errors or omissions
- Postpone or extend the RFP deadline for its own convenience or benefit
- To disregard all non-conforming, non-responsive or conditional proposals
- Approve or disapprove sub-contractors
- Waive technical defects in responses and to accept the response which, in the sole judgment of the County, is in its best interest
- Negotiate with any and all respondents
- Change the amount of funding available
- Enter into a contract with another respondent in the event the originally selected respondent fails to execute a contract with the County
- Reject any or all proposals or portions thereof, and to reduce the scope of the Project

V. Responsive Proposal

Deadline

The deadline for submitting a proposal for the Furnace Creek Last-Mile Design Project is *July 16, 2024, 4:30 p.m.*

Proposal Format and Requirements

Use the following format and requirements in developing a proposal in response to our request for proposals. You can include additional information that you feel is relevant, but the evaluation team will evaluate your proposal based on the specific criteria and requirements identified in this RFP.

- Identify clearly on the cover that your proposal is for the Furnace Creek Last-Mile Design Project for the County of Inyo, California.
- Include a name and email address for a point of contact with your company.
- Include your company's legal address.
- Include your California Contractor License Number (cslb.ca.gov)
- Identify any subcontractors that you will use for this project.
- Indicate whether you are currently a network operator, and if so, identify any areas or towns in Inyo County where you provide last-mile services.
- Include a Scope of Work statement to summarize your proposal and the project deliverables.
- Describe in detail how you will satisfy the project deliverables in the Project Scope of Work.
- Detail the costs associated with the project deliverables in your proposal, including job titles and hourly rates for any labor costs. Please note that the design work is subject to prevailing wage.
- Indicate whether your company can construct the network infrastructure that you are proposing.

- Estimate the rough-order-of-magnitude construction costs associated with the project in your proposal.
- Indicate the average cost of the anticipated network construction per subscriber location.
- Describe the Internet service speeds that will be attainable with this solution, including the following:
 - Meets 100Mbps synchronous
 - Meets 1Gbps synchronous
 - Exceeds 1Gbps synchronous
- Indicate whether the proposed solution will support open-access, last-mile network infrastructure.
- Describe how this network can support multiple ISPs.
- Indicate whether the proposed solution will connect to an open-access, middle-mile network.
- Indicate whether the proposed solution will include additional middle-mile network, and if so, whether that middle-mile network will be designed to be operated as an open-access, middle-mile network.
- Develop a project plan that includes staff resource scheduling and a timeline.
- Demonstrate qualifications and experience by providing examples and descriptions of network infrastructure design projects for at least three customers that demonstrate the understanding of, and the ability to design last-mile network infrastructure solutions.
- Include at least 3 customer references with email addresses and phone numbers.
- Identify your company's proximity to the County of Inyo for the purposes of understanding our region's unique and challenging geography for this project.
- Describe your financial, operational and technical capacity to execute the project successfully within the specified timeframe.
- State whether you will be able to enter into a County of Inyo Contract #151 (Exhibit A to this RFP).
- The proposal should be delivered to the Clerk of the Board. The proposal should include two paper copies and a high-resolution, digitally readable file, preferably in PDF format.

Use of Proposals and Respondent Guarantees

The respondent's proposal submitted in reply to this RFP acknowledges that the rights have been reserved to include the selected respondent's proposal or any part or parts of the selected respondent's proposal in the final contract. Submission of any proposal indicates acceptance of the conditions contained in the RFP. All proposals submitted shall be valid for a period of 120 calendar days from the date of proposal opening.

Standard County Contract

The respondent selected for contract award will be required to enter into a contract with the County of Inyo using the County of Inyo Contract #151 (Exhibit A to this RFP). Identify any requested exceptions to the contract in the response to this RFP. Only exceptions identified in the submittal responses to this RFP will be considered during contract negotiations with the selected vendor.

Obligations Assumed by Submitting a Proposal

By submitting a proposal, the respondent certifies that:

- Those submitting proposals do so entirely at their expense. There is no expressed or implied responsibility on the part of the County to reimburse respondents for any expenses incurred for preparing or submitting proposals, providing additional information when requested by the County, or participating in any selection interviews.
- The respondent thoroughly understands the terms of the specifications and has successful experience in each area of the proposed work.
- The respondent has made themselves familiar with all Federal and State Laws, local laws, ordinances, and regulations which in any manner affect the project work or the delivered product.
- The prices in this proposal have been arrived at independently and without consultation, communication, or agreement, for the purpose of restricting competition as to any matter relating to such prices, with any other respondent.
- The respondent has not paid or agreed to pay any fee or commission, or any other item of value contingent on the award of this contract to any employee, official, or current contracting consultant of the County of Inyo.

No contract shall be considered binding upon the County until the County Board of Supervisors has made a final award and executed the contract. The County is interested in working with a respondent able to initiate the project immediately following successful contract negotiations.

Failure to Execute Contract

Failure to properly execute and deliver the contract within thirty (30) days as specified, at the County's discretion, may be cause for cancellation of the award.

In the event the award to the successful respondent is cancelled, the award may then be made to the next highest ranked responsive and responsible respondent, and such respondent shall fulfill every stipulation embraced herein as if the original party to whom the award was made; or the County may reject all of the proposals, as its interest may require.

Insurance and Bonds

The successful respondent shall procure and maintain insurance as specified in Attachment D to the County of Inyo Contract #151, and with the provisions specified in said Attachment D.

Respondent Competency

The County may make such investigation as it deems necessary to determine the ability of the respondent to perform the work. The County may require the respondent to present satisfactory evidence that it has sufficient experience and skilled workers to complete the work. The County will use the forgoing information, if required, as an aid to selecting a proposal for contract award. Nothing contained in this section shall be construed as depriving the County of its discretion in the matter of selecting a proposal for contract award. The County reserves the right to reject any proposal if the evidence submitted by the respondent or an investigation of such respondent fails to satisfy the County that such respondent is properly qualified to carry out the obligations of the Project.

Prime Contractor Responsibility

Any respondent's proposal that includes equipment, software or services that are marketed, supported or supplied by other companies or individuals must contain a statement that the respondent will act as the prime contractor for the entirety of project, not limited to the development, design and delivery of the project.

Legal Address

The address given in the proposal is hereby designated as the legal address of the Respondent. Such address may be changed at any time by notice in writing via email delivered to the County Project Contact. The delivering at such legal address or the depositing in any post office, in a postpaid, registered wrapper, directed to the above-named address of any notice, letter, or other communication to the Respondent shall be deemed to be a legal and sufficient service upon the Respondent.

VI. Evaluation and Selection

Selection and Award of Contract

The Contract award will be based on “best value.” The County’s evaluation team will evaluate all of the relevant factors, including responsiveness to the proposal requirements, qualifications of the proposer, the proposer’s history in providing the service and any other reasonably established factor necessary to determine what proposer will provide the “best value” to the County.

As soon as practicable after evaluation and ranking of the proposals, selection of the top finalist, and contract negotiations resulting in a signed contract with the vendor, the contract will be presented to the Board of Supervisors for award at its sole discretion, contingent on funding. The contract instrument will be a County of Inyo Contract #151.

In the event the County is unable to negotiate a contract with the top finalist, the County may, at its sole discretion, negotiate a contract with another respondent, or choose not to award the contract, or put the proposal out to bid again.

Ranking

A team selected by the County will evaluate all proposals deemed responsive to the request. The proposals will be ranked based on an analysis conducted by the evaluation team. The top ranked respondents will be deemed finalists and may be asked to meet in person as a means of further evaluating the respondent’s claims provided in the proposed solution.

Discussions and product demonstrations requested by the County may take place with the finalists to clarify the proposal and obtain a best and final offer. Any award granted will be granted to the respondent proposing the best solution for the County as determined solely by the County.

Evaluation Criteria

No commitment will be made to select a respondent’s proposal solely on the basis of price. Cost is a consideration but is not in the evaluation criteria. The County will evaluate the detail substantiating the general estimated costs provided as part of your response to this RFP.

The primary basis for selection will be the proposed solution’s ability to meet the County’s project goal and associated requirements; however, consideration will also be given to overall value, as well as to the respondent’s reputation and ability to be a strong business partner.

Responses to this RFP will be evaluated according to the following criteria for the overall proposal:

Evaluation Criteria for the RFP Response	
Completeness of Response	Pass/Fail
Ability to Satisfy the Scope of Work	25
Experience and Qualifications	25
Financial, Technical, and Operational Capacity	25
Contractor’s proximity to and familiarity with the region	25
Last-mile solution meets 100Mbps symmetrical bandwidth speeds	Pass/Fail
Last-mile solution meets 1Gbps synchronous bandwidth speeds	10
Last-mile solution exceeds 1Gbps synchronous bandwidth speeds	10
Design uses fiber-optic cable for last-mile network designs	10
Design supports open-access, last-mile network infrastructure	10
Project Plan with Staff Resource Scheduling and Timeline	10
Ability to enter into County of Inyo Contract #151	Pass/Fail
Total	150

VII. Funding and Timeline for the Broadband Expansion Projects

This project is funded by a USDA RD BTA grant. The County of Inyo was awarded \$110,500 for this grant, \$93,500 of which is budgeted for contracted engineering design work. The proposal selection and award timeline may take up to 2 months. The full scope of work for this project must be completed and delivered to the County of Inyo before September 2025. The final project deliverables, once completed, will be presented to the USDA RD for reimbursement through the County of Inyo.
