

City of Joplin, Missouri



REQUEST FOR Information (RFI) Partnership for a Citywide Fiber Optic Network

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Proposals are due by **5:00 PM CST on September 2, 2022**

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Introduction

The City of Joplin, Missouri is seeking a partner interested in helping the City bring fiber-optic broadband to every home and business in the City. The intention of this RFI is to open a dialog with interested Internet Service Providers (ISPs) or other parties interested in helping the City to meet that goal. The City is open and encourages innovative ideas on how to fund and bring a fiber solution.

1 Project Overview

In September 2018, the City of Joplin began the process of assessing whether the City should adopt a Smart City approach to advance more resilient economic and community development to benefit its citizens and businesses. Internal and external stakeholders were interviewed to determine which practices and initiatives the City could undertake to begin a technological upgrade. Through evaluating the City's current state, conducting peer city research, and obtaining design inputs, the City's team created a Smart City Roadmap (<http://mo-joplincdbgr.civicplus.com/DocumentCenter/View/865/Smarter-Joplin-Roadmap>) to help guide community leaders and City staff through the next steps of implementing the Roadmap. In September 2019 the Joplin City Council approved the Joplin Smart [City Roadmap](#).

In 2021, Finley Engineering, Inc. and its partner CCG Consulting to conduct a Broadband Gap Analysis that looked in detail at the feasibility of bringing fiber to the City. That analysis concentrated on three major areas to assess fiber feasibility, 1) an analysis of the Joplin market and the demand for broadband, 2) an engineering estimate of the cost of building fiber to the whole City, and 3) a financial analysis to explore if it is financially feasible for an ISP to build fiber in Joplin. The [Broadband Gap Analysis Report](#), delivered to the City in October 2021 concluded that one of the best paths forward for the City was to engage in a public-private partnership (P3).

Due to recent changes in the broadband industry such as supply chain issues, inflation, and an increasing cost of borrowing money, the City recently retained Alvarez & Marsal to coordinate with Finley Engineering and CCG Consulting to refresh the financial model to confirm viability, develop a deployment plan, and help the City select the engineering model for fiber.

The City recognizes that there is a wide range of arrangements being negotiated today between cities and ISPs. In some cases, ISPs are funding and owning a new fiber network. partnerships where a city funds some portion of the network (e.g., fiber backbone, empty conduit for ISPs to use), and multiple ISPs using an open-access network. The City is interested in all of these ideas and others that a potential partner wants to suggest with the understanding that the City wants ISP partners to be significantly invested in the City and that the City is not interested in becoming an ISP. Please note that City leaders have committed American Rescue Plan resources to aide in strengthening the City's Smart Grid for resiliency, reliability, and redundancy of current broadband systems. These resources may be allocated towards a future public-private partnership, this is at the discretion of the City Manager with approval from City Council on future partnership(s).

This RFI is the next step in the process, and the City want to hear from ISPs and others who are interested in working with the City to bring a fiber network throughout the City of Joplin.

2 General Requirements

The City is seeking innovative partners to deploy a citywide open-access fiber network. We do not want to hear from electronics vendors, fiber contractors, or others who only want to provide a component of the solution. This RFI is aimed at opening a dialog only with potential partners.

In your response to this RFI, please include at least the following information:

1. A brief executive summary of your proposal.
2. The name(s), address, email address and telephone number for the person(s) at respondent that can answer questions regarding responses to the RFI.
3. Detailed information about business structure of the respondent. If the RFI response involves a partnership between multiple parties, provide the information for each significant partner, including:
 - (a) The legal name of the respondent as is specified in its charter or other organizing/creation document, as well as the state in which the respondent business entity is organized.
 - (b) The names and mailing addresses of any parent or subsidiary of the respondent (namely, any other business entity owning or controlling the respondent, in whole or in part) and a statement describing the nature of any such parent or subsidiary business entity.
 - (c) Please describe any partnership arrangements or other significant business arrangements that are integral for your proposed solution.
4. Please describe your approach to creating a fiber broadband partnership with the City. Discuss the following:
 - (a) Describe the business model at a high-level. What would your role in the partnership and the City's role?
 - (b) What is the proposed ISP structure (i.e., would you act as the only retail ISP on the network, or would you bring in additional ISPs?)
 - (c) How do you envision the funding for the network? What costs would you cover and what would you expect the City to cover? Are you willing to considering funding and owning the entire fiber network; and what would you need to consider that option?
 - (d) How do you envision your role and the City's role in governance of the network?
 - (e) What are some innovative ways in which the City could realize some income stream from profits or revenues?
5. Describe your technical experience in providing the services anticipated by your proposal.
 - (a) Provide a brief history, particularly as related to telecom and broadband.
 - (b) Provide any statistics related to your current telecom-business that you think would be relevant and of interest to the City. This might be such things as the number of retail

- customers currently served, the number of miles of fiber owned, etc.
- (c) Provide the same statistics as item (b) for operations currently in Missouri.
 - (d) List all the states where you have retail broadband customers and/or open-access customers.
 - (e) How many people do you employ? How many of these employees work in areas related to telecom or broadband?
6. Please describe your approach to implementing your proposal. Discuss the following:
- (a) How long do you estimate it will take to build fiber to all parts of the City? What fiber construction methods would you plan to utilize? The City of Joplin was devastated by a tornado in 2011. Please describe how you would ensure survivability and resiliency for a fiber network.
 - (b) What electronics technology do you envision using?
 - (c) Please describe your vision for the local operations in the City. What's your vision in terms of number of local jobs created? Would you offer a local business office and local customer service?
 - (d) If you plan to be a retail provider on the network, please describe the broadband products including speeds and prices you envision offering.
 - (e) If you envision an open-access network, please describe how would you engage with and bring other ISPs onto the network? If you are involved in operating an open-access network elsewhere, please describe the fees charged to ISPs and other tenants to use the fiber network.
 - (f) Please describe your vision of a broadband product(s) and the associated pricing to serve low- income households.
 - (g) Provide any other information that will help us know you better and to understand your proposal.
7. The City is interesting in creating a private network to connect City facilities. Describe how this goal might be achieved with your proposal.
8. A project of this magnitude will require a significant financial commitment from respondent. Describe your ability to provide the funding that you have proposed. If the respondent's proposal is of interest to the City, we may ask to see audited financial reports and other evidence of respondent's current financial strength.
9. Describe any assistance or concessions you envision requesting from the City other than funding.

3 RFI Instructions, Definitions, and Schedule

The response should be prepared simply and economically, providing straightforward and concise responses to the question. False or inaccurate information will result in the rejection of the response. Once a response has been submitted, material, process, design changes, or product substitutions may not be made without the prior written consent of the City.

3.1 RFI Modifications

The City reserves the right to modify or change any information presented in this RFI as more information becomes available. Any RFI modifications will be provided to all known interested parties by email.

3.2 Responsibility for Costs

The Respondent shall be fully responsible for all costs incurred in the development and submission of the proposal or any other costs incurred prior to the issuance of an agreement or contract. The City shall not assume any contractual obligation as a result of the issuance of a proposal request, the preparation or submission of a proposal, the evaluation of proposals or the final selection of a proposal.

3.3 RFI Submittal

3.3.1 Deadline

The City will accept electronically submitted responses no later than **5:00PM CST on September 2, 2022**. The Respondent should provide a single PDF file. Late submittals will not be considered. All responses must be clearly labeled in the subject of the transmittal email as “RFI for Partnership for a Citywide Fiber Optic network”. The City urges respondents to initiate email transmittals in advance of the deadline to mitigate risk of nonreceipt.

Deliver the RFI to:

All submittals must be submitted directly to:

Johan Bullington

Email: JBulling@joplinmo.org

3.3.2 RFI Questions

All questions pertaining to this RFI must be submitted by email to:

Johan Bullington

Email: JBulling@joplinmo.org

Respondents that wish to be notified of the responses to questions should request at the above email address to be added to the list of interested parties.

Any written questions from Respondents must be received no later than **August 17, 2022**. Questions or requests for clarification received after this deadline will not be answered. The City will provide written answers to all questions and circulate the questions and answers to all known interested parties.

3.3.3 Schedule of Activities

The City has established the following schedule:

Issue RFI	August 8, 2022
Final acceptance for Respondent questions	August 17, 2022
City will respond to all questions	August 22, 2022
RFI responses due	September 2, 2022

3.3.4 RFI Format

In order to facilitate a timely and fair evaluation of RFI proposals, a standard response format has been developed and is documented in this section. All Respondents are required to format their proposal in a manner consistent with the guidelines below:

Section	Topic
1	Letter of Transmittal
2	Executive Summary
3	Respondent Information
4	Proposed Partnership
5	Additional Information

The topics must be organized under the specific section as stated above and indicated appropriately. Each topic must be addressed in the proposal, or the proposal may be rejected.

3.3.5 Authorized Representative

Respondent should indicate the name, title, and contact information of the person who will be authorized to enter into an agreement with the City if selected.

3.4 Confidentiality

The City shall use reasonable efforts to preserve the confidentiality of any proprietary or confidential information submitted by the Respondent which is clearly designated and identified as such. Given that the City is a governmental entity, it has commitments and obligations subject to “freedom of information” laws or similar statutory disclosure requirements. The City is subject to full compliance with these laws and statutory requirements. Compliance with these laws or statutes shall be deemed not to constitute a breach of requested confidentiality of a given proposal response to the RFI.

3.5 Proposal Disposition

Any proposals received in response to this RFI shall become the property of the City.

3.6 Review and Selection Process

The City will evaluate each Respondent's information. The City's goal is to open a dialog with potential partners, and the City will selectively reach out to respondents. The City might negotiate with RFI respondents or might issue a follow-up RFP as the next step. The City may take no action after reviewing responses.

4 General Provisions

4.1 RFI Acceptance and Rejection

The City reserves the right to accept any proposal or part of a proposal; to reject any or all proposals; to waive irregularities or informalities in any proposal, in any manner deemed in the best interest of the City.

4.2 Presentations and Site Visits

The Respondent may be invited to make a presentation in person or by conference call.

4.3 Miscellaneous

Respondent must disclose any potential conflict of interest with the City and any of its employees.

Respondent shall hold all information provided in its response in confidence and shall not reveal its proposal to or discuss its proposal with others until all relevant contracts are awarded. By the submission of a proposal, the Respondent represents and warrants that in connection with the response that no attempt has been made nor will be made to restrict competition, to induce any other person or party to submit, or conspire with any other parties to restrict or otherwise manipulate prices or competition relating to this RFI or any resultant contracts.

The City does not and shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, age, national origin (ancestry), disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or military status, in any of its activities or operations. These activities include but are not limited to, hiring and firing of staff, selection of volunteers and vendors, and provision of services. The City is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our staff, citizens, volunteers, contractors, vendors, and clients. The City expects the Respondent to comply with these standards.