

Wireless Clearinghouse
Bidder's Conference
5/21/08 2 – 3:15 p.m. TAC Conference Room

Attendees: Peter McAllenney, Fountains Spatial; Bryan McBride, Clough Harbour & Associates; Raymond Curran, Adirondack Information; Tom Moylan, Steeplecom (phone). TAC staff: Howard Lowe and Julie West, project directors

1. Q: Can you please clarify if it is intentional that the scope of work items and the items on the schedule do not match. The schedule is much more detailed.

2. A: We are aware that the schedule is more detailed. The scope was more of an overview and the schedule breaks it down into more detailed sections of the work that we are expecting.

3. Q: What existing information is available as a starting point?

A: TAC will begin to pull together existing data or sources and contacts for information that exists at NYS Office for Technology, NYS Data Center, APA, and other groups that might be relevant in this project. In addition, the current data field list that has been included in the RFP will be validated with cell/wireless providers and emergency services agencies to make sure that it is comprehensive enough to meet their needs.

4. Q: Is the contractor expected to interface with the cell/wireless carriers?

A: Julie West, on the TAC staff, will be the primary liaison with the carriers, and is responsible for understanding their site selection requirements and communicating them to the contractor. Relevant specifications and standards will be provided to the contractor in advance of field work.

5. Q: Can you please clarify what is meant in the RFP by “comprehensive analysis” and “viewshed analysis”. The level of analysis required could substantially change the bid.

A: This is meant to be an inventory of existing structures including GIS mapping, photos and all web enabled. It is not intended to be a determinant as to whether each structure would be a definite match for each cell/wireless provider or for each emergency services need. The analysis only means that the contractor is expected to make sure that all data elements that are required have been gathered and that the GIS portion and web interface are done correctly and do the proper testing.

6. Q: Is the list on page 8/9 a comprehensive one?

A: It is meant to be a minimum requirement, and we expect that there will be refinements as a result of carrier site selection requirements, but we do not anticipate major changes or additions.

7. Q: Has a methodology for gathering data been determined, or is there an estimate of how long each site visit may take?

A: This depends on the degree of existing data for the individual site and what information the municipality has readily available for potential sites.

8. Q: Can you please discuss further the field work requirement and the relationship between the contractor, student workers and other interested parties?

A: There is a GIS department within the Earth and Environmental Sciences (Geography) Department at SUNY Plattsburgh. Eileen Allen is our staff liaison for the department's GIS function and she will work with us to select two student field researchers to work with us on this project. These students will be selected on ability to work independently as well as ability to stay with the project during the duration. Eileen will work with us to make any student turnover as seamless as possible. She will oversee the data input portion of this project. It is up to the contractor to provide training to the student workers on what methodology will be used for the process. The students will be paid and their travel expenses will be covered from a separate budget. The contractor may car pool with the students on field trips as needed but is not required to attend all field trips with the student workers.

9. Q: Do bidders need to build in travel expenses to Plattsburgh for the training or can the student workers come to the contractor's company location for the training?

A: Bidders should include all of their travel costs to Plattsburgh for student training, occasional meetings with TAC staff, and organizational meetings with ANCA and municipalities in the Park.

10. Q: Who will be the liaison to the municipalities?

A. The Adirondack North Country Association (ANCA) will be the liaison to the municipalities. ANCA will work with us to set up two initial meetings with the municipalities. We plan to have two of these group meetings, perhaps one in the North portion of the Adirondack Park and one in the South portion. The contractor will be required to attend these meetings as they will be the opportunity to present information about the project, answer questions and possibly check existing information with the municipal officials and ask them to update the list of existing structures at that time.

11. Q: Does the contractor have to go on all field data gathering trips?

A: No. We would appreciate it if you could include an estimate of what percentage of the trips you feel you would attend. We would ask that you accompany the students until you are comfortable that they can collect the information on their own and then join them occasionally throughout the process to make sure that the procedures are being followed.

12. Q: What is the scope of area that this project will cover? Is it the entire Adirondack Park?

A. Yes, we hope to cover all towns within the blue line. That includes 104 towns. We understand that all the towns may not participate but we hope to encourage them to do so with the help of ANCA.

13. Q: Will TAC prioritize what towns the contractor should start with?

A: We will inform the contractor which towns have agreed to participate but we will also work with ANCA to encourage the others to work with us since the field trips should cover as many towns on each trip as possible instead of skipping around all over the place.

14. Q: Has a methodology been determined for how best to collect the data?

A: No, we will work with the contractor to define the methodology and use as much of the existing information as possible.

15. Q: Is Part A, #2 in the RFP considered an outline of the work plan?

A: Yes.

16. Q: Please clarify what is meant by “minimal visual impact” on page 6.

A: Within the Adirondack Park, the APA regulations are strict about towers. Therefore, sites that might be able to accommodate a high antenna extension are not what we are looking for. We are looking at existing high structures. We may add a data field that indicates whether there is a 100 ft clearing on each side of the structure or if it is obstructed. It does not mean that it cannot be used if it is hard to see from the road, only that it may not be right for some of the providers. Therefore, it should not be ruled out, only identified as being obstructed, for example.

17. Q: Is there any limit to the travel budget of the student workers?

A: Yes, there are always limitations and these are determined by the travel policy at SUNY Plattsburgh and the grant funding. However, we feel that there are sufficient funds budgeted for the student travel. This will be monitored by TAC.

18. Q: Has TAC determined the exact data structure to be used, for example, shape files, where it will be housed, is ARC GIS the software that should be used, and how will remote access to the data be done? Also, what software is available to use or does the contractor need to use part of the budget to acquire software licensure?

A: We ask the contractors to propose the solution that they feel is best within the budget.

19. Q: Are there limitations on what software solutions should be proposed?

A; We ask that the contractors keep in mind that we are a non-profit with limited funding and propose the best solution within reasonable pricing.

20. Q: How integrated will the data be? Will there be a non-GIS front end for updating and an interface to GIS which automatically translates the web enabled front end into the GIS database?

A: The Technical Assistance Center assumes responsibility for licensure. Bidders do not have to assume this cost.

21. Q: Can you please describe how this project got started?

A: The CBN Connect project originally planned only to run a fiber infrastructure but as the planning developed it became more apparent that it would be necessary to integrate wireless broadband to the most remote areas as well as provide backhaul opportunities for wireless providers to fill the gap that we have in this region. The cell coverage issue along the Northway also influenced the development of this project. The database to be developed in the *Wireless Clearinghouse* is something that will help CBN Connect but also provide information to homeland security and emergency services agencies, which is a growing need throughout the Adirondack Park.

22. Q: Will the contractor be responsible for collecting data in the field or will this work be performed by students?

A. The contractor will be responsible for all data collected, and will have student field workers available to assist in the collection. It is intended that the students collect much of the field data.

23. Q: Will the web application be hosted by CBN? If so, does this organization have the necessary hardware and software infrastructure? In particular, if the application uses GIS technology from ESRI (e.g., ArcGIS Server), will CBN have a license for this software?

A. Obtaining licensing or software is TAC's responsibility.

24. Q. Other than building height, are other factors such as topography, line of site, etc. to be considered in identifying potential sites?

A. Please see at the end of the RFP the minimum list of data items to be collected. Factors such as line of sight may also be collected if relevant to a particular site (e.g. one that has line of sight to other potential sites), and other factors may need to be identified which are particular to each site.

25. Q. Will there be limitations placed on what organizations will have ability to make updates to the web application using data entry forms? Other than data verification at the time of data entry, will someone be reviewing this information to ensure accuracy and quality?

A. Yes access to the database will be limited and any additions or modifications to the database must be reviewed for accuracy.

It was stated at the conclusion of the conference that one of TAC's goals for the project is to develop data and access to the data that adds value to the information carriers need to assess site selection.