# Request for Proposal: Broadband Mapping and Gap Analysis in Appalachian Region

Duration of Project: ~2 months

Posting Date:  11.20.2023

## General Information

### Connect Humanity

[Connect Humanity](Connect Humanity) supports, catalyzes, and scales holistic solutions providing people with the internet access and means needed to participate fully in a digital society.

Our approach centers on non-traditional operators and civil society organizations who are demonstrating progress in connecting historically underserved communities, pioneering efforts to make the internet more affordable, providing digital literacy training, and more. What we hear time and again is that they lack access to the capacity and capital to meet the needs in their communities. That's why our model focuses on meeting these non-traditional operators where they are, assessing the needs of the communities they serve, and providing a range of financial tools to help them holistically and sustainably achieve digital equity.

### The Appalachian Digital Accelerator

In January 2023, Connect Humanity partnered with the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) to ensure 50 communities from across the Appalachian region have the support they need to prepare a robust, comprehensive, digital infrastructure and equity plan. Through an open call, we received applications covering more than 150 communities across the region. In July we will begin working with participants on their broadband plans, putting each community on a path to securing the funds they need to connect. This process will create a community of highly skilled individuals across Appalachia who can continue working toward digital equity until it is achieved. Once plans are completed, we will work with communities to identify the financial plan that best fits their needs and support them in completing the appropriate grant application to secure funds.

*The Appalachia Digital Accelerator is majority funded by the Appalachian Regional Commission which has contributed $6.3 million (80% of the total project cost).*

# Purpose:

Connect Humanity invites experienced vendors to submit proposals for Mapping and Gap Analysis services in the Appalachian Region, specifically related to broadband demand across 12 states (Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia).

The purpose of this project is to create AGOL environments for each of our grantees on which they can begin designing proposed broadband network builds.  This will include: the creation of base layers and data source layers in AGOL for use by contractors and grantees (if applicable) as well as the export of shape files, images, and zoomable PDFs for each geography.

# Statement of Work:

The selected vendor will be expected to provide comprehensive Mapping and Gap Analysis services for the specified counties.  The following references expectations for all 12 states outlined above. More information about the grantee locations and the specific geographies can be found here in the grantee details (see counties mentioned) : https://maphub.net/ConnectHumanity/appalachia-digital-accelerator

## Specifications:

### Data sources

Submissions to this RFP are expected to include, at minimum, the following data sources.  Additional sources of data may be proposed.
- Census (population demographics and connectivity and adoption data from the American Community Survey)
- FCC National Broadband Map, including layers:
  - broadband summary by geography type
  - provider summary by geography type
  - provider summary: fixed broadband

### Expected Process and Deliverables:
- Create a detailed GIS base map using ArcGIS Online, integrating Census and FCC data accurately.
  - Ensure the map includes layers for Census block and H3R8 hexagons formats, providing a comprehensive visual representation.
  - Analyze base Census data and FCC data to extract relevant broadband-related information.
  - Perform spatial joins to merge FCC and Census data seamlessly, ensuring accurate mapping and analysis.
  - Include map layers depicting top claimed speeds, technologies (wired-only and wired+fixed wireless views), and top claimed ISPs (wired-only and wired+fixed wireless views).

- Interactive PDF Development: Develop an interactive PDF with clickable map layers, allowing users to explore broadband-related data points in a user-friendly manner.
- Provide detailed spreadsheets detailing ISPs operating in each county, their claimed services, and counts by Census block of Fabric Locations, Fabric Units, Census households, and square miles.
  - Include clear and organized data to facilitate further analysis and decision-making.
- Map existing federal and state awards as GIS files, ensuring a clear visualization of awarded areas.
- Calculate remaining gaps based on Initial Mapping, providing a visual representation of underserved regions.
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- Integrate broadband demand data, provided by Connect Humanity in ESRI format, into the GIS map, representing it graphically based on business size for easy interpretation.

**Optional additional scope:** Vendors may elect to propose an expanded scope to include an analysis of Ookla speed test data (for the same counties), using Ookla data provided by Connect Humanity or the grantees, highlighting the location or concentration of tests that represent opportunities for state-level challenges to the current maps. If proposing this additional scope, the budget should be submitted separately from the main proposal. Choosing not to submit a proposal for this additional scope will not diminish the applicant's score for the main proposal.

# Requirements:

## Technical Compliance:

- Ensure all technical requirements comply with industry standards, GIS best practices, and relevant software specifications.

## Collaboration:

- Collaborate closely with Connect Humanity's project team to integrate data seamlessly and address any project-related concerns promptly.

## Timeliness:

- Complete all tasks and deliverables within the specified two-month timeframe, meeting project deadlines consistently.

## Milestones and Deliverables:

The required duration of this project is not to exceed a maximum of 8 weeks/2 calendar months from the date of award. All outlined and required deliverables will need to be completed and submitted to Connect Humanity within this timeframe. Applicants are required to outline the key milestones, related deliverables, and payment schedule for their proposed project.

## Proposal:

The following should be included in the Proposal:

- Detailed Project Approach and Methodology:  Outline a comprehensive approach to addressing each task specified in the RFP, detailing the methods, tools, and techniques to be employed for Mapping, Gap Analysis, and Business Analysis services.

- Proposed Project Timeline with Milestones:  Present a clear and realistic project timeline outlining specific milestones for each phase of work, indicating key tasks and deadlines for completion.

- Relevant Experience and Client References: Provide a summary of the vendor's relevant experience in similar projects, showcasing successful outcomes and expertise in GIS mapping and data analysis.

- Cost Proposal: Prepare a detailed cost proposal outlining the budget breakdown for Mapping and Gap Analysis. Specify the cost associated with each task, including any licenses, software, data acquisition, labor, and overhead costs.  Clearly indicate any additional costs that may arise during the project, ensuring transparency in the budgetary estimates.

- Team Composition, Qualifications, and Expertise:   Detail the composition of the project team, including roles, responsibilities, and qualifications of team members. Provide information about the qualifications of the key team members who will be involved in the project.  Specify the project manager and key personnel who will be responsible for coordinating with Connect Humanity's team and ensuring the successful completion of tasks.  Highlight relevant certifications, training, and expertise in GIS technologies, data analysis, and business intelligence.

- Data Security and Confidentiality Measures: Describe the vendor's data security protocols and measures to ensure the confidentiality and integrity of sensitive information during the project.  Include any relevant certifications or standards adhered to regarding data security and privacy.

- Quality Assurance and Project Oversight: Outline the vendor's quality assurance processes to maintain the accuracy and reliability of data analysis and mapping services. Describe the mechanisms in place for project oversight, including regular progress reports, milestone reviews, and communication protocols with Connect Humanity.

## Evaluation Criteria:

The following outlines how the proposal will be evaluated.

Experience and Expertise (20 points):
- Demonstrated Success (8 points): Has the vendor successfully demonstrated GIS mapping and data analysis in projects of similar scope and complexity?
- Client References (7 points): Can the vendor provide references from previous clients attesting to their expertise and service quality in related projects?

- Team Qualifications (5 points): Does the vendor's team possess relevant certifications and qualifications, showcasing expertise in GIS technologies and data analysis methodologies?

Methodology and Approach (20 points):
- Clear Methodology (8 points): Does the vendor's proposed methodology clearly outline the steps for GIS mapping and data analysis as required by the RFP?
- Innovative Approach (7 points): Is the vendor's approach tailored to address unique challenges in the Appalachian Region specified in the RFP?
- Comprehensive Understanding (5 points): Does the vendor show a thorough understanding of the project scope, proposing effective strategies for mapping and gap analysis?

Cost-Effectiveness (16 points):
- Reasonable Cost Proposal (8 points): Is the vendor's cost proposal competitive and reasonable, considering the outlined scope of work in the RFP?
- Transparent Cost Details (5 points): Are costs for mapping and gap analysis services clearly detailed, providing pricing transparency?
- Value-Added Services (3 points): Does the vendor offer value-added services or cost-saving measures that benefit Connect Humanity without compromising quality?

Timeliness and Project Management (12 points):
- Adherence to Timeline (6 points): Does the vendor's proposed project timeline align with the specified 8-week timeframe, ensuring timely completion of tasks?
- Well-Defined Project Management (4 points): Is the vendor's project management plan well-defined, including communication protocols and mechanisms for proactive delay management?
- Balanced Approach (2 points): Does the vendor provide a balanced approach to manage project timelines effectively, ensuring phases are completed within stipulated deadlines?


Compliance and Understanding (8 points):
- RFP Understanding (4 points): Does the vendor's proposal demonstrate a thorough understanding of RFP requirements, addressing specified tasks accurately?
- Clear Proposal (3 points): Is the proposal clear, concise, and logically organized, reflecting the vendor's understanding of the project scope and Connect Humanity's needs?
- Technical Comprehension (1 point): Does the vendor provide relevant examples and explanations, showcasing comprehension of technical aspects in the RFP?

Cost Breakdown (8 points):
- Detailed Cost Breakdown (3 points): Is the breakdown of costs detailed and accurate for GIS base map creation, data analysis, and map layers development?
- Specific Expense Details (2 points): Are expenses for software licenses, labor, data acquisition, and additional resources clearly specified?
- Transparent Presentation (3 points): Does the vendor transparently present costs for mapping and gap analysis services separately, with itemized miscellaneous costs?

Direct and Indirect Costs (6 points):
- Differentiation (3 points): Is there a clear distinction between direct costs (e.g., labor, materials) and indirect costs (e.g., overhead)?
- Defined Direct Costs (2 points): Are direct costs associated with each project phase well-defined, ensuring pricing transparency?
- Justified Indirect Costs (1 point): Is the percentage or fixed amount representing indirect costs reasonable and justified?

Profit Margin (2 points):
- Justifiable Profit (2 points): Is the proposed profit margin justifiable based on industry standards and project complexity?

Payment Schedule (2 points):
- Milestone Alignment (2 points): Does the payment schedule align with project milestones, ensuring a balanced cash flow?

Alternative Pricing Models (2 points - Bonus):
- Innovative Pricing Models (2 points): Does the proposal include innovative pricing models, offering flexibility to Connect Humanity?

Taxation and Additional Charges:
- Taxation and Charges (N/A: Requirement): Is it clearly stated whether taxes are included in the pricing, and are any additional charges, such as shipping or insurance, specified?

Note: The total points allocated for evaluation criteria add up to 100, ensuring a comprehensive and balanced assessment of the vendor proposals. Each criterion reflects key aspects outlined in the RFP and is essential for selecting a vendor capable of meeting Connect Humanity's project requirements effectively.

## Process for Submitting Questions:

Clarification Period:
- Potential vendors and interested stakeholders will have one week from posting date (11.20.23) to submit questions.

Designated Contact and Submission Format:
- Potential vendors and interested stakeholders can submit questions through this google form.

Response Process:
- Connect Humanity will prepare written responses to all submitted questions. These responses will address the queries without disclosing the source of the question and, where appropriate, clarify the RFP.  The response will also be sent directly to the vendor and interested stakeholders who submitted the question when requested to do so.

By following this process, Connect Humanity ensures transparency, fairness, and equal treatment of all vendors during the question submission and response phase of the RFP process.  Please submit these questions [here](here).

## Special Terms and Conditions:

- Offerors may be required to execute a Nondisclosure Agreement (NDA).
- Organizational Conflict of Interest required. Those institutions without a Conflict of Interest will be required to adhere to Connect Humanity's policy.
- Vendors will be required to follow all federal contractor regulations.

## Proposal Deadline:

Proposals will be accepted on a rolling basis and will be considered until a vendor is chosen.  **Proposals received before December 4th, 2023 will receive priority review.**

## Award Notification:

Offerors will receive notice of award via email acceptance.  We anticipate choosing a vendor prior to the end of the year.

## Contact Information:

Please submit final proposals to accelerator@connecthumanity.fund.