

Greater East Grand Region

**Request for Proposals
for
Greater East Grand Region
Broadband Project**

**Request for Proposals
GEGEC Broadband Project**

**Greater East Grand Economic Council
Att: Dwayne Young
PO Box 465
Danforth, ME 04424
207-448-2316**

Issue Date: 10/11/21

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1. Introduction

Launched in April 2019, the Greater East Grand Region (GEGR) economic planning initiative was designed from the beginning to be a citizen-led effort. The strengths and assets of the Greater East Grand Region are founded in a people who love a rural way of life and a diverse mix of landscapes and communities encompassing in total over 500,000 acres in size. An economic development plan for the region was completed in 2020 and identified access to high-speed broadband service as a top priority. In 2020, the GEGEC Task Force was established and received ConnectMaine funding to initiate region-wide planning which has continued in 2021. The region is ready to solicit proposals through a formal RFP process as part of its Phase 2 planning effort.

The Greater East Grand Economic Council (GEGEC) and its Broadband Task Force are soliciting proposals for the design and implementation of the hardware and electronics necessary to provide a robust and reliable broadband solution for the region. The long-term goal of the project is to enable access to FTTP services for every household in the region, however, the financing and economics of the project may dictate a hybrid and phased approach to providing the desired coverage. As such this hybrid approach may require other technologies such as fixed wireless to be part of the solution, at least on an interim basis.

Mission Broadband is an independent telecommunications consulting firm retained by the GEGEC to manage the RFP process for the Regional Broadband Project. Mission Broadband will collaborate with the GEGEC and participating vendors throughout the RFP process and will provide consultative support as necessary.

2. RFP Process Timetable and Proposal Submission Requirements

Milestone	Target Date
RFP Posted	October 11, 2021
All Written Questions Submitted	October 29, 2021, 5:00 pm
Response to All Questions Posted	November 5, 2021 5:00 pm
Proposals Due by 4:00PM PM Eastern	November 12, 2021
Award Date	TBD

2.1 Proposal Submission Requirements

An electronic copy shall be emailed to the RFP Administrator, Mission Broadband at rfp@missionbroadband.com and received by 4:00 PM Eastern time on the Proposal Due Date noted in the Timetable above.

2.2 Proposal Addendums and Q&A

2.2.1 Vendors should submit any questions, noted errors, discrepancies, ambiguities, exceptions, or deficiencies they have concerning this RFP by emailing such requests, with “GEGEC RFP Inquiry” in the subject line, to RFP

Administrator, Mission Broadband at
rfp@missionbroadband.com.

- 2.2.2** The RFP, all addendums and any questions received and any response thereto, will be posted on the GEGEC web site at <https://www.eastgrandregion.org>. Vendors shall include all addenda in their responses, and all instructions in Section 6 that apply to the issued RFP also apply to any/all addendums.

2.3 Late Proposals

Any Proposal, portion of a Proposal, or unrequested Proposal revision received GEGEC after the time and date specified, will be returned to the Proposer unopened.

2.4 Withdrawal of Proposals

No Proposer may withdraw their Proposal for a period of ninety (90) days from the date of opening. All Proposals shall be subject to acceptance by the GEGEC during this period.

To withdraw a Proposal prior to the opening, the Proposer shall request the withdrawal in writing. All costs associated with the withdrawal (i.e., mailing fees) will be borne by the Proposer.

2.5 Rejection

The GEGEC reserves the right to reject any and all Proposals, to waive any informalities or defects in Proposals or to accept a higher cost Proposal if it is deemed to be in the best interest of the region or a particular GEGEC. The GEGEC also reserves the right to negotiate with the successful Proposer.

2.6 Information for Proposers

All Federal and State taxes must be excluded from the Proposals. A tax exemption certificate for the GEGEC shall be furnished to the successful Proposer upon request.

Before submitting a proposal, all prospective Proposers are encouraged to carefully examine the Specifications, research the area, and fully inform themselves as to the existing conditions and limitations under which the work will be performed. Failure of the above will not release a Successful Proposer from the Contract Documents or the requirements to complete the contemplated work for the consideration set forth in the Proposal.

Each Proposer shall make their Proposal from their own examinations and estimates and shall not hold the GEGEC, its agents or employees responsible for any information received from them.

3. Executive Summary

The Greater East Grand Region (GEGEC) economic planning initiative began formally in April 2019 by a concerned group of local residents and business leaders committed to developing a community-based ten-year plan to advance its vision for the region's sustainability and future vitality. This economic planning region was created in 2019 because of the historical and current strong business, education and community connections to Danforth as a service center and the cross-county boundaries of school district RSU 84/MSAD 14 served exclusively by East Grand School in Danforth. The region, with 7 communities, 3 plantations and 6 TWP's, is situated at the remote extremities of three counties, has seen ever-changing international border rules, and is divided by two state legislative districts and three state tourism areas. This makes the prospect of coordinated economic and community planning very limited.

As citizens of once flourishing settlements of loggers, farmers and entrepreneurs, we are reclaiming our rural heritage and true sense of community. As new-found pioneers, we are striving to build local and far-reaching partnerships in education and economic vitality with a focus on three connected goals: (1) supporting existing businesses and emerging entrepreneurs, (2) investing in youth and young adults, and (3) creating a regional landscape fortified with the necessary infrastructure, utilities, housing, local businesses, and public services for families, elders, and individuals to create a sustainable and satisfying rural lifestyle.

Like many rural counties and regions in America, the Greater East Grand Region is feeling the effects of gaps in broadband service within the area. There are limited Internet Service Providers (ISPs) offering broadband services within the region and data gathered shows that nationally recognized problems such as the Homework Gap, insufficient access for remote workers and students, minimal investment by existing providers, affordability, and the digital divide are real and present issues in the region. A recent survey done to assess satisfaction with broadband services throughout the region shows that only 37% of respondents feel their internet service usually meets their needs. Additional data shows roughly 70% of the area is defined as underserved or unserved. The impact of the pandemic has also deepened the need for broadband infrastructure improvement within the region. Significant upgrades to the available broadband in the GEGEC communities is one of the most significant strategies to advance the region's goals and priorities. Its economic vitality, community vibrancy and workforce development will be possible only with increased broadband investment. The intent of the broadband plan is to complete a broadband vision for the region and provide realistic feasibility plans for each community's broadband needs.

The GEGEC is soliciting proposals for the design and implementation of the hardware and electronics necessary to provide a robust and reliable broadband solution for the region. The long-term goal of the project is to enable access to FTTP services for every household in the region, however, the financing and economics of the project may dictate a hybrid and phased approach to providing the desired coverage. As such this hybrid approach may require other technologies such as fixed wireless to be part of the solution, at least on an interim basis.

Many factors need to be considered in developing a region-wide broadband plan, to include ownership models, capital expenses, operational expenses, financial feasibility, end user take rates, variations in end user costs, outside plant facilities, rights of way, central office facilities, electronics, etc. A determination of long-term success will be the utilization of the network as

well as applications supported on the network and how those applications and services help to shape the future of the Greater East Grand Region. All discussion and research to date supports that a robust, high-speed broadband network can positively impact education, economics, healthcare, transportation, and other important aspects of a vibrant 21st century region.

The Greater East Grand Region recognizes that there are a variety of viable technical approaches and ownership / partnership models available that could potentially achieve the region's desired outcomes. Rather than prescribing a network design or ownership model, GEGEC has defined required and desired quality and performance standards including, but not limited to, key network technical characteristics, performance requirements and life expectancy.

The GEGEC is committed to maintaining an objective perspective on the technologies and operational models to be considered for achieving its desired outcomes. All qualified vendors are invited to propose innovative solutions to achieve the GEGEC's desired outcomes and request that all proposals provide the detail necessary for a fair evaluation of alternative proposals and determine whether and how each proposed solution will satisfy the GEGEC's expected outcomes.

4. **Statement of Purpose**

- 4.1 The GEGEC is issuing this Request for Proposal (RFP).
- 4.2 The GEGEC is soliciting proposals for the design and implementation of the hardware and electronics necessary to provide a robust and reliable broadband solution for the region. The long-term goal of the project is to enable access to FTTP services for every household in the region, however, the financing and economics of the project may dictate a hybrid and phased approach to providing the desired coverage. As such this hybrid approach may require other technologies such as fixed wireless to be part of the solution.
- 4.3 GEGEC also seeks responses on the deployment and management of access and transport electronics of the network. GEGEC seeks a Public-Private Partnership with an organization that will provide services on the network and fulfill all of the operational functions of the network. The components requiring responses are detailed in sections 8 through 13 and are as follows:
 - 4.3.1 Region-Wide Broadband Access Network: Outside Plant Design and Implementation – RFP Section 8.
 - 4.3.2 Region-Wide Broadband Access Network: Access and Aggregation Electronics Design and Implementation – RFP Section 9.
 - 4.3.3 Transport Electronics Design and Implementation – RFP Section 10.
 - 4.3.4 Central Office or Colocation Facility with Access to Service Providers – Section 11.
 - 4.3.5 Service Providers – RFP Section 12.
 - 4.3.6 Network Operator: a qualified operator to manage and operate the network – RFP Section 13.

5. **The Digital Divide**

The digital divide is defined as the gap between those segments of the population that have access to affordable Internet and other communications technologies and those that have limited or no access. The digital divide also speaks to the disparity of technology skills present across different segments of society. The digital divide is a significant issue throughout the Greater East Grand Region and the GEGEC seeks long term assistance in developing and implementing a program to help close the digital divide. The following comment came from one of the community members in the GEGR: “It is impossible to be an impactful member of society without a strong, reliable internet connection. The new "have versus have not's" is no longer divided by income but by the accessibility to the internet.”

The GEGEC is interested in vendor programs and resources that will help close the digital divide. Vendors are asked to outline any resources, educational programs or other supporting information and activities that would assist in helping to close the digital divide. The GEGEC is not soliciting pricing for any of these services at this time but would like to

understand at a high level the different strategies and approaches that vendors would use to resolve the issue.

6. Instructions to Vendors

- 6.1 All information provided to vendors by the GEGEC is considered to be proprietary information and must be used solely for the purpose of preparing the proposal and is not to be released outside the Vendor organization without written permission from the GEGEC.
- 6.2 All proposals submitted shall be valid for six months or until a contract is signed, whichever comes first.
- 6.3 A Vendor can team with another vendor and/or respond to some or all of the RFP. No advantage will be assessed for a proposal that addresses all RFP components, and conversely, no disadvantage will be assessed for a proposal which does not address all RFP components.
- 6.4 The GEGEC recognizes that developing and implementing a region-wide broadband solution will take several years to complete, at best. Due to the severity of insufficient broadband throughout the region the GEGEC is asking vendors to be creative in their responses for providing solutions and to explore all options for providing improved broadband services on an interim basis in areas where network construction will not occur for some time. The GEGEC is open to all technology solutions, including wireless and fixed wireless technologies that may provide services on a multi-year interim basis.
- 6.5 Wherever possible, Vendors shall use the numbering convention in this RFP when formatting their response. The Vendor response shall be explained in detail and shall indicate how the Vendor proposes to satisfy each requirement, where necessary. It is desired that Vendors indicate compliance, non-compliance, understood or exception for each line item in the RFP, however, it is recognized that some vendors may propose solutions with narratives that are difficult to fit into the format of the requested response. As such, where appropriate Vendors are encouraged to provide alternate responses. The GEGEC is interested in exploring all options to achieve the desired outcomes.
- 6.6 As the selection process progresses, vendors may be asked to provide professional references from similar projects, including contact name, mailing address, phone number, email address, and description of the projects.
- 6.7 As a separate document, but included in the RFP response submittal, the GEGEC requests an Executive Summary that summarizes the Vendor's approach to a prospective partnership with the GEGEC for this project.

By responding, the Vendor states that the Proposal is not made in connection with any competing Vendor submitting a separate response to the RFP and is, in all aspects, fair and without collusion or fraud.

- 6.8 The GEGEC reserves the right to seek clarification of each Proposal or to make an award without further discussion of the Proposals received. Therefore, it is important that each Proposal be organized and submitted in a clear and complete manner.
- 6.9 Vendors may use the accompanying file titled *GEGEC RFP Pricing Matrix.xls* that is referenced in Exhibit B.2 for the pricing of their proposed solutions. Using this matrix is preferred but not mandatory. The tabs on the spreadsheet are named to match the RFP sections requiring proposals.
- 6.10 This RFP document is the property of the GEGEC and shall not be reproduced or used without permission of the GEGEC.
- 6.11 All materials submitted in response to the RFP become the property of the GEGEC. If there is any concern about confidentiality, mark the appropriate pages of your response “Confidential.”
- 6.12 The Successful Vendor may be required to post a 100% Performance and Payment Bond.

7. Authorized Negotiator

- 7.1 The proposal shall be signed by the person authorized to legally bind the proposal.
- 7.2 The proposal shall designate the Vendor’s authorized negotiator, who shall be empowered to make binding commitments.

8. Insurance

- 8.1 Each Vendor selected by the GEGEC shall comply with all rules, regulations, ordinances, codes, and laws relating to its work or the conduct thereof and shall secure and pay for any permits and licenses necessary for the execution of its work.
- 8.2 Each Vendor selected by the GEGEC shall be responsible for implementing precautions for the safety and security of, and shall provide reasonable protection to prevent damage, injury or loss to Vendor’s employees, any subcontractor’s employees, GEGEC personnel, and the general public. Each Vendor shall comply with all applicable safety regulations including Dig Safe, traffic safety laws, OSHA, and regulations of the municipalities in the GEGEC. Each Vendor shall comply with and give notices required by applicable laws, statutes, ordinances, codes, rules, and regulations, and lawful orders of public authorities bearing on safety of persons or property or their protection from damage, injury or loss

- 8.2.1 General Liability Insurance: \$1,000,000 per occurrence; \$2,000,000 in the aggregate.
 - 8.2.1.1 Premises/Operations
 - 8.2.1.2 Products/Completed Operations
 - 8.2.1.3 Contractual
 - 8.2.1.4 Personal Injury
 - 8.2.1.5 Bodily Injury / Property Damage
- 8.2.2 Automobile Liability: \$1,000,000 per occurrence; \$2,000,000 in the aggregate.
- 8.2.3 Professional Liability Insurance: \$1,000,000 per occurrence; \$2,000,000 in the aggregate.
- 8.2.4 If the above insurance is written on a claim made form, it shall continue for three years following termination of this agreement. The insurance shall have a retroactive date of placement prior to or coinciding with the effective date of this agreement.
- 8.3 Workers Compensation and Employers' Liability – per Maine Statute
- 8.4 The GEGEC must be named as additionally insured on the COI.
- 8.5 Each Vendor selected by the GEGEC further agrees to require its subcontractor(s), if any, to maintain General Liability Insurance, Worker's Compensation and Employer's Liability Insurance, where applicable. The amounts of such coverage shall be as reasonably determined by such Vendor selected by the GEGEC.
- 8.6 Proof of policies shall be provided before contractual agreement is reached.

9. Region-Wide Broadband Access Network – Outside Plant Design and Implementation

- 9.1 The GEGEC is soliciting proposals for the design and implementation of the hardware and electronics necessary to provide a robust and reliable broadband solution for the region. The long-term goal of the project is to enable access to FTTP services for every household in the region, however, the financing and economics of the project may dictate a hybrid and phased approach to providing the desired coverage. As such this hybrid approach may require other technologies such as fixed wireless to be part of the solution, at least on an interim basis.
- 9.2 Please see attachment *GEGR_Addresses.kmz* in Exhibit B.3 that is a generalized map of addresses plotted by lat/long throughout the region. This design was supplied to the Greater East Grand Region through the Vetro Cares program and is included only as a reference of a high-level potential solution. Respondents should disregard any pricing or rate information contained in the layers of the KMZ map.
- 9.3 The GEGEC desires the network to be constructed with additional capacity beyond the infrastructure required to provide broadband services to subscribers. There are several identified applications for this additional capacity as follows:
 - 9.3.1 Connectivity to existing or future municipal locations within each community.
 - 9.3.2 New residential and commercial subdivisions.
 - 9.3.3 Future smart-city and municipal IOT applications.
 - 9.3.4 The sale of dark fiber and wholesale services.
- 9.4 Aesthetics: The GEGEC requests that all infrastructure fit into the existing landscape to maintain the rural and scenic ambience. Use of existing infrastructure is recommended. If a building or tower needs to be erected, then a review to gauge the aesthetic impact may be required. All accessory buildings within the Shoreland Zoning area will undergo review for permitting.
- 9.5 Vendors proposing any fiber optic outside plant, design, and implementation must adhere to the requirements below.
 - 9.5.1 All fibers will be single mode.
 - 9.5.2 Vendor must provide a high-level explanation of the OSP requirements for this project and explain any powered field equipment required to provide the solution proposed.
 - 9.5.3 Fiber cable must be installed per manufacturer’s specifications.
 - 9.5.4 Fiber drops will be terminated into Network Interface Devices (NIDs) on the outside of residential structures. Electronics may be placed inside or outside depending on Vendor and customer preference.

- 9.5.5 Fiber drops will be a combination of aerial and buried. Where aerial drops exist, Vendors may use aerial solutions. Where existing utilities are underground, drops must be buried.
- 9.5.6 For buried drops, conduit such as microduct is required.
- 9.6 Vendors proposing any wireless technologies or wireless-hybrid technologies for access or aggregation shall adhere to the requirements below:
 - 9.6.1 Vendors should clearly mark the locations and state the mounting method and the necessary provision of power supply and backhaul connection for each Access Point or Fixed-Wireless Access device proposed.
 - 9.6.2 All field electronics must have sufficient battery to run for 8 hours if commercial power is lost. Please provide additional power resources, i.e. generator, as applicable.
- 9.7 The Successful network construction Vendor will be responsible for the preparation of all necessary pole attachment licensing applications for this project.
- 9.8 Successful Vendor(s) will secure permits and approvals and finalize construction details with the GEGEC's support as needed.
- 9.9 Successful Vendor(s) will be required to deliver engineering maps and as-builts of final network including documents detailing all poles, drops, slack loops, splice and termination points in paper and digital formats as determined by the GEGEC.
- 9.10 Vendor pricing may be provided by filling out the pricing matrix titled *GEGEC RFP Pricing Matrix.xls* referenced in Exhibit B.2 or optionally use their own pricing format.

10. Region-Wide Broadband Access Network – Access and Aggregation Electronics Design and Implementation

- 10.1 The GEGEC is requesting design and implementation of the hardware and electronics necessary to provide a robust and reliable broadband solution for the region. The long-term goal of the project is to enable access to FTTP services for every household in the region, however, the financing and economics of the project may dictate a phased approach to providing the desired coverage.
- 10.2 The diagram in Exhibit A.1 illustrates an example of hybrid network deployment including fiber to the premise and fixed wireless. The diagram in Exhibit A.2 illustrates the applications that may run over the end-to-end

network and the Diagram in Exhibit A.3 illustrates a standard fiber drop configuration. Vendors are encouraged to propose designs they feel optimally meet the requirements and specifications of this RFP.

- 10.3 The core network must provide scalability and flexibility to adapt to changing bandwidth and application needs over time. The desired characteristics of the network are as follows:
 - 10.3.1 Vendor must ensure that high availability, redundancy, and hot swappable common components (i.e., control cards/processors, power supplies, etc.) are built into the core electronic components.
 - 10.3.2 The network must be flexible enough to provide different types and classes of services to meet different customer and Service Provider requirements.
 - 10.3.3 Vendors proposing solutions involving wireless technologies must explain the frequencies, channels, and licensed or unlicensed spectrum proposed.
- 10.4 Network Termination Equipment (NTE) on customer premise.
 - 10.4.1 NTE is defined as the electronic devices that are installed at the customer premise, either inside or outside of the structure.
 - 10.4.2 NTE shall include model options of 10/100/1000 Base TX ports facing subscribers.
 - 10.4.3 It is required that Vendors provide NTE options capable of supporting Wi-Fi for customer use inside the premise.
 - 10.4.4 Vendors should explain compelling advantages and features of their solution beyond the baseline listed above.
- 10.5 Vendor pricing may be provided by filling out the pricing matrix titled *GEGEC RFP Pricing Matrix.xls* referenced in Exhibit B.2 or optionally use their own pricing format.

11. Internet Connectivity and Transport

- 11.1 Please explain with as much detail as possible how bandwidth will be transported to and from the regional network.
 - 11.1.1 Please explain the physical route of the fiber connection that will provide Internet service to the GEGEC.
 - 11.1.2 Explain the capabilities the system has to handle speeds and interfaces beyond those required for the initial project launch.
 - 11.1.3 Explain any redundancy or failover capabilities of the system.

- 11.2 Vendor pricing may be provided by filling out the pricing matrix titled *GEGEC RFP Pricing Matrix.xls* referenced in Exhibit B.2 or optionally use their own pricing format.

12. Central Office or Colocation Facility with Access to Service Providers

- 12.1 The GEGEC requires rack space in a Central Office or Colocation Facility within the municipal boundaries of the GEGEC. This space will be used for all of the head end and access electronics required to operate the network. The Central Office or Colocation facility shall have the following characteristics:
 - 12.1.1 Facility shall run in a High Availability (HA) configuration, with fully redundant power, cooling and uninterruptible power source (UPS) batteries with backup power generation for survival through sustained commercial power outages.
 - 12.1.2 Facility shall have environmental controls for humidity and temperature, and fire suppression systems.
 - 12.1.3 Equipment shall be mounted securely in racks and cabinets, in compliance with national, state, and local codes. All equipment shall be connected with uninterrupted cutover to battery and generator.
- 12.2 In the event that additional land is required for CO and head End placement as part of this project, GEGEC will work with the winning vendors to identify suitable pieces of land.
- 12.3 Vendor pricing may be provided by filling out the pricing matrix titled *GEGEC RFP Pricing Matrix.xls* referenced in Exhibit B.2 or optionally use their own pricing format.

13. Service Providers

- 13.1 GEGEC is requesting Service Providers to provide services to subscribers in the community. The GEGEC seeks vendors who will provide a superior customer experience for the GEGEC’s diverse population and needs.
- 13.2 Service Provider must have a strong track record of providing outstanding customer service and support and any vendor chosen by the GEGEC shall provide the following items to demonstrate this track record. (Note: as the selection process progresses, vendors may be asked to provide the following information but this information is not required with the initial proposal):
 - 13.2.1 Three customer references.

- 13.2.2 Summary of organizational programs or initiatives aimed at improving the customer experience.
- 13.2.3 Annual Key Performance Indicator (KPI) goals and achievements for Customer Service and Technical Support for the past three years.
- 13.3 The GEGEC is requesting Service Providers to provide the following services:
 - 13.3.1 Internet Bandwidth. Vendor pricing may be provided by filling out the pricing matrix titled *GEGEC RFP Pricing Matrix.xls* referenced in Exhibit B.2 or optionally use their own pricing format.
- 13.4 The GEGEC plans to negotiate final Service Level Agreement (SLA) requirements with the winning Vendor(s). Please explain your approach to SLA guarantees for residential and commercial subscribers.
- 13.5 Service Provider vendors must perform the following functions:
 - 13.5.1 Sales and marketing activity to sell services to subscribers.
 - 13.5.2 Billing, collection, and payment of all monthly recurring charges to include Federal and State taxes, surcharges, and assessments.
 - 13.5.3 Standard Customer Service functions.
 - 13.5.4 Technical Support Level I / II / III: Vendor must have a Network Operations Center (NOC) or Technical Support call center to take calls from subscribers with service and repair issues.
- 13.6 Vendor pricing may be provided by filling out the pricing matrix titled *GEGEC RFP Pricing Matrix.xls* referenced in Exhibit B.2 or optionally use their own pricing format.

14. Network Operator

- 14.1 The GEGEC is seeking proposals from qualified operators for the operation, management, and maintenance of the broadband network that will be constructed in the GEGEC region. The GEGEC desires subscribers to have an excellent customer service experience.
- 14.2 The GEGEC understands that qualified Vendors who wish to respond solely to this section will be required to partner with other Vendors for the network architecture to be defined. In the event that the GEGEC does not receive the desired responses for this section, it is possible solicitation of these services may occur through a future RFP process.

- 14.3 In the event that the winning vendor for the Network Operator function is not the ISP on the network, the exact functions that will be performed by the Network Operator will be defined during contract negotiations. In the event that the Network Operator is also the ISP on the network, all Service Provider and Network Operator functions will be performed by the winning vendor. In both cases, the installation and repair processes will need to be defined along with escalation procedures.

15. Evaluation and Selection Criteria

- 15.15 The GEGEC seeks a GEGEC-wide robust, scalable, and future proofed broadband network. There are several components requiring proposals in this RFP and the GEGEC will select the most appropriate vendor for each component. Each Vendor is encouraged to provide detailed responses to demonstrate its experience and expertise in providing services as requested in this RFP. The selection will be based on all factors listed for each component and may not go to the lowest price proposal if price is outweighed by a combination of other features and factors in the Successful Vendor's proposal.
- 15.16 The GEGEC is not obligated to accept or select any proposal received in response to this RFP. In particular, the GEGEC may select proposals in whole or in part, or it may disqualify any and all proposals received.
- 15.17 The GEGEC will use selection criteria that includes the following for each section of the RFP: Vendor Viability, Technical Merit, Implementation Timeline and Cost. The selection decisions made by the GEGEC under this RFP are final.
- 15.17.1 In evaluating Vendor Viability, the GEGEC will score vendors based on the following criteria:
- 15.17.1.1 The Vendor's previous experience with complex projects of a similar size, scope, and characteristics and/or their experience with the element(s) of the project for which they are providing proposal(s).
- 15.17.1.2 Documentation from the Vendor that demonstrates the Vendor's experience with similar projects (or element thereof) of the same size and scope.
- 15.17.1.3 Any other information that bears on the Vendor's suitability for this project.
- 15.17.2 Technical Merit of Proposal scores will be assigned based on how well the proposed solution meets the currently understood and projected needs of the GEGEC. This may include, among other things, service performance characteristics (SLA terms), technology description, continuity of network platform, diversity and redundancy in the Service Provider's network, diversity from existing

services, transport technology, reliability, technical support capabilities, scalability, expandability, future network capabilities, and the appropriateness of the design proposal for the GEGEC and how well it meets the stated priorities of the network.

15.17.3 In evaluating the Implementation Timeline, the GEGEC will consider, among other things, the projected starting date, the overall time to install, the disruption of existing services, the complexity of the installation and the projected completion date as well as the reasons for these projections. If appropriate, a starting date relative to completion of a prior milestone may be used.

15.17.4 Costs may include, among other things, monthly recurring costs, non-recurring costs, fees, the termination liability associated with existing contractual obligations, and any additional costs that the GEGEC may potentially realize based on any given Vendor selection. All costs that can reasonably be anticipated over the desired 20-year lifecycle should be addressed. Note: The GEGEC is tax exempt.

16. Rejection/Negotiation Rights

- 16.1 The GEGEC reserves the right to disqualify any proposals for substantial non-compliance with the terms of this RFP. The GEGEC reserves the right to accept or negotiate the contractual terms of any proposal(s) in response to this RFP.
- 16.2 The GEGEC reserves the right to select multiple Service Providers.
- 16.3 The GEGEC reserves the right to select multiple equipment providers.

Exhibit A.1: Example Broadband Architecture

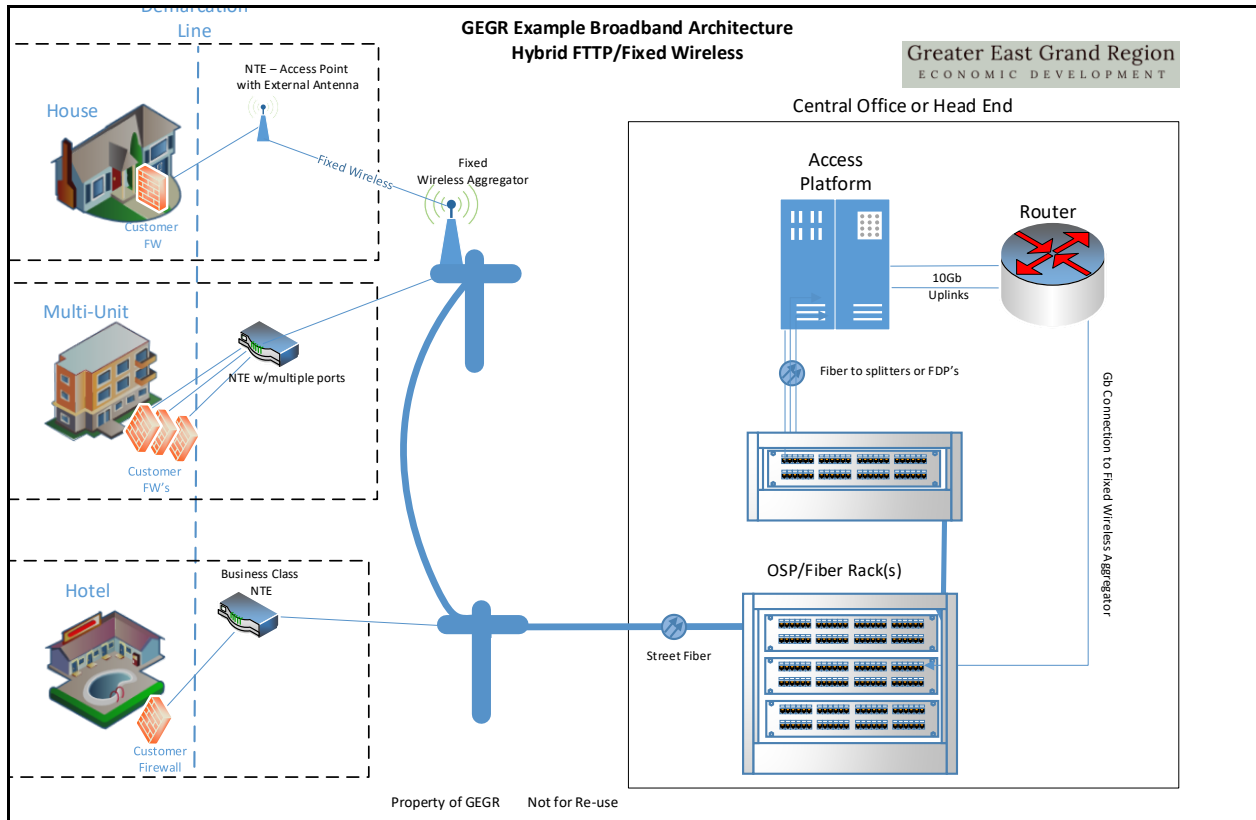


Exhibit A.2: Examples of Network Applications

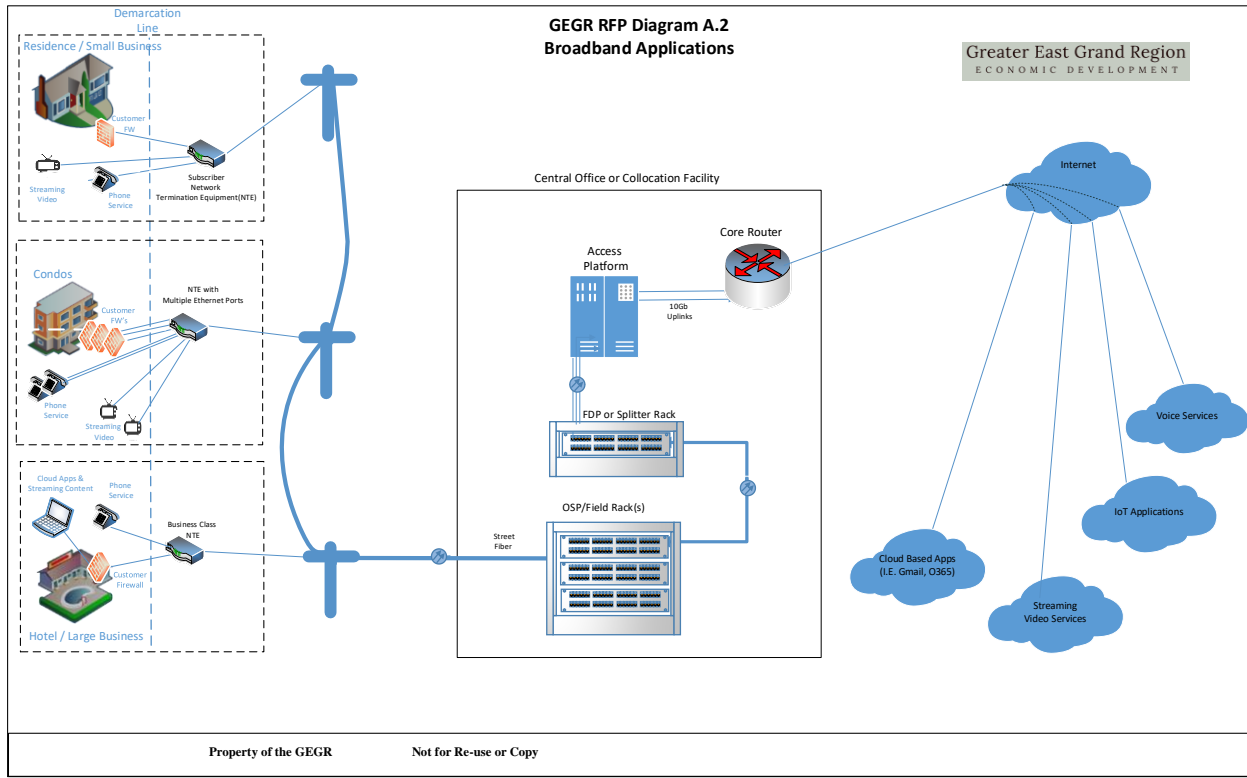


Exhibit A.3: Example of FTTP Standard Drop Configuration

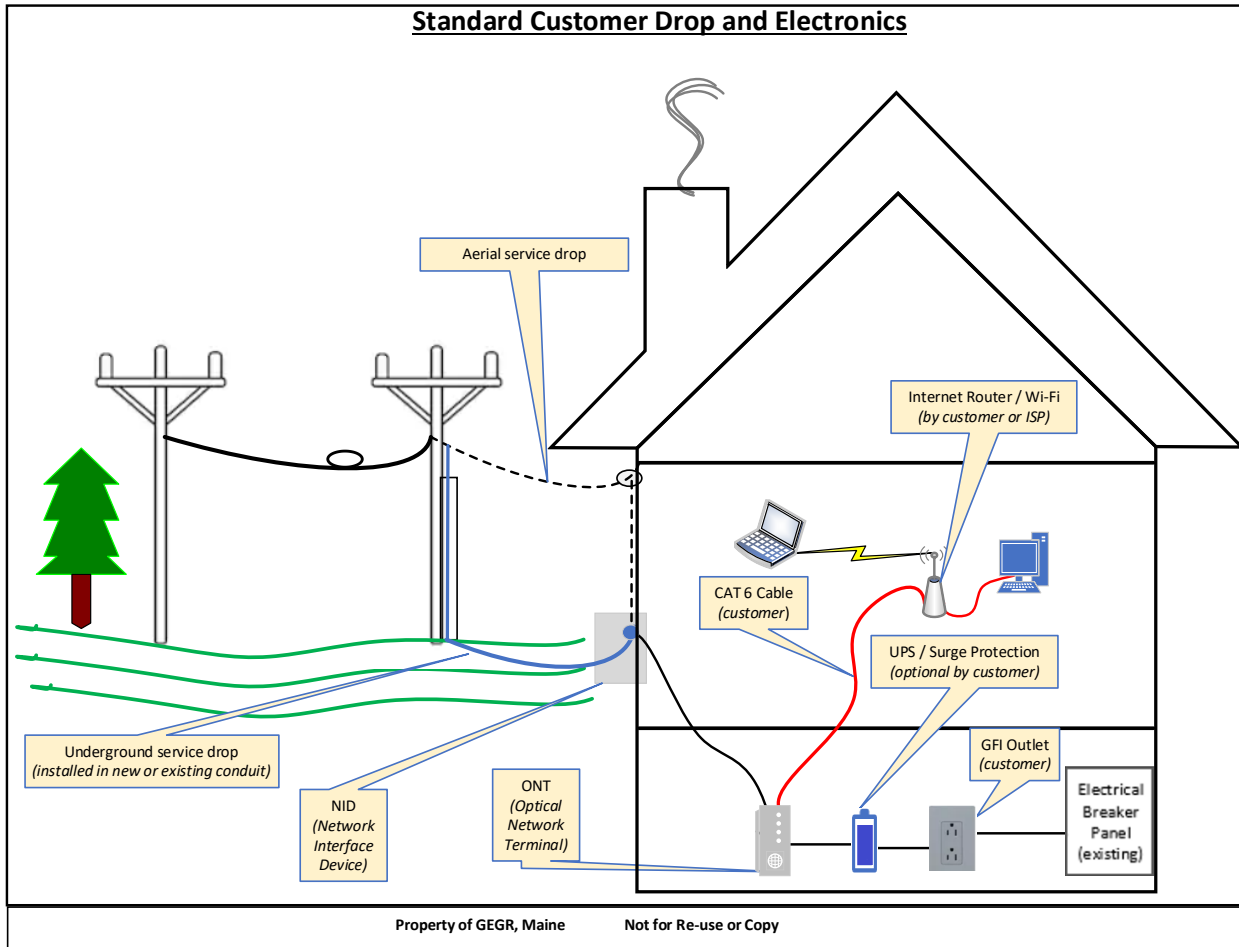


Exhibit B: List and Description of Associated RFP Documents

B.1: GEGEC Broadband Planning - Phase I Report

This document is the GEGEC ConnectMaine Phase I Broadband Planning Report. The document can be reviewed or downloaded at the following URL:

<https://www.eastgrandregion.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/11-20-20-GEGEC-Phase-1-Report.pdf>

B.2: GEGEC RFP Pricing Matrix.xls

This file is an Excel spreadsheet to be used by Vendor's in pricing out their solutions. There is a corresponding tab for each section of the RFP with instructions for pricing out the proposed solution. Use of this Pricing Matrix is preferred but not mandatory.

B.3: GEGR Addresses.kmz

This file is a high-level design of an FTTP build depicting backbone and lateral routes, CO location, drops and RDOF areas. This design was supplied to the Greater East Grand Region through the Vetro Cares program and is included only as a reference of a high-level potential solution. Respondents should disregard any pricing or rate information contained in the layers of the KMZ map.