



# Springfield Sangamon Growth Alliance

## REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

### Broadband Needs Assessment and Feasibility Study

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## INTRODUCTION

The Springfield Sangamon Growth Alliance (SSGA) is soliciting proposals from qualified consulting firms to conduct a broadband needs assessment and feasibility study for Sangamon County (the County). The scope of work will include identification of areas where service is less than adequate and will provide the County with the information needed to analyze and implement the best solutions for broadband connectivity across the County.

### SECTION 1: REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL OVERVIEW

#### 1.1 About the County and SSGA

Located in the heartland of both Illinois and the nation, Sangamon County was established in 1821 and has an estimated population of 200,000 in an area of 877 square miles. Sangamon County has a strong and thriving local economy that is based upon healthcare, professional services, state government, tourism, and agriculture, all of which help provide for one of the lowest unemployment rates in the state. Sangamon County enjoys a national reputation as a wonderful place to live, do business and raise a family, and is home to several of the nation's most significant historic sites.

For more information on Sangamon County, visit: <https://co.sangamon.il.us>.

The SSGA is committed to pursuing economic prosperity and growth for Sangamon County and the City of Springfield, Illinois. Since its founding in 2018, this public-private sector partnership has advanced regional economic development efforts. Led by a volunteer, diverse, industry-driven board of directors, SSGA is helping create and market a financially sound community that can attract new businesses and skilled talent, while retaining the innovation companies and local workforce who already make Sangamon County their home.

For more information on SSGA, visit <http://www.thriveinspi.org>.

#### 1.2 Scope of Work

##### A. Service and Infrastructure Analysis –

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the digital inequities experienced by rural communities and emphasized the importance of digital access for education, work, and health care.

*A.1 Technical Analysis* - The Illinois Department for Commerce and Economic Opportunity Office of Broadband created a dashboard of broadband availability throughout the state. Proposals should:

- Validate existing public and private sector internet infrastructure.
- Develop an inventory of current broadband providers' services, pricing strategies, and coverage areas.
- Analysis should consider existing City of Springfield coverage and opportunities to coordinate with existing public infrastructure.

*A.2 Market Analysis* – The selected consultant will compile and analyze data on current and future broadband needs, usage, and solutions for residents, businesses, institutions, and agencies throughout the County. The market assessment should detail types of service, pricing

availability, and limitations. This may include conducting residential and business market research about the current providers and future needs.

B. Technology Options

Successful proposals will identify technologies to achieve reliable broadband access throughout the County and provide a framework for evaluating the options. It may be helpful to identify areas of the county that meet the FCC definition of broadband access (25 Mbps download / 3 Mbps upload), but do not provide service adequate for business or residential needs.

C. Potential Partnerships

Provide examples of entities that might be prospective partners with a summary of how each relationship would function. These partnerships include public, private, and nonprofit agency involvement.

D. Financing and Funding – The consultant will detail strategies to assist the SSGA and County obtaining needed funds from appropriate programs best matched to the recommended solution design. Financing and funding opportunities include:

- a. Grant funding options
- b. Public-private partnerships
- c. Capital, revenue bond, and other self-funding options

E. Recommendation for Broadband Strategies

Based on consultant's analysis and feedback from the community, recommended business models should include:

- a. Ownership of network (Public, Private, or Public-Private Partnerships)
- b. Management and operation of network (Public, Private, or Public-Private Partnerships)
- c. Capital investment required
- d. Assets required
- e. Potential services and partners
- f. Potential private entities or cooperatives that may be interested in providing services

### 1.3 Timing

- A. Provide an estimated project timeline including:
  - Estimated start and end dates
  - Proposed dates for presentation to County Board
- B. Consultant will provide biweekly updates on progress during the work period to SSGA.
- C. Consultant will provide digital and hard copies of final feasibility study.

## **SECTION 2: PROPOSAL EVALUATION AND ACCEPTANCE**

Interested firms should submit a proposal no later than 5:00 p.m. on March 7, 2022.

### 2.1: Submission Requirements

A. Cover Letter

Provide a cover letter that summarizes the community's goals and the project and the point of contact for the firm.

B. Work plan

A detailed work plan will include:

- A description of tasks to be accomplished

- The project timeline with deliverables and key milestones
- Outline the project management approach

D. Budget

Present a budget in a line-item format. Include a summary of estimated costs per task or activity.

E. Qualifications and Key Staff

Describe direct experience and knowledge your firm has with broadband solutions and with working with governments and public-private sector collaborations. Include resumes of key staff from the organization/team assigned to this project and provide an organization chart identifying personnel assigned to the proposal.

E. References with contact information

Provide contact name, phone number, email address, and brief description of work performed. Highlight similar projects, if relevant.

2.2: Evaluation Criteria – The SSGA will evaluate proposals based on the following criteria:

- Experience and ability to successfully complete the scope of services
- Knowledge of technologies to provide broadband services
- Knowledge and experience with funding mechanisms
- Demonstrated experience with similar broadband planning activities in communities of similar size and demographics
- Ability to complete scope of work within the established time and in a cost-effective manner

### SECTION 3: PROPOSAL PROCEDURE

#### 3.1 Proposed Schedule

RFP Released: February 14, 2022

Questions due to SSGA: February 21, 2022

Responses provided: February 25, 2022

Proposals Due: March 7, 2022

#### 3.2 Communications

Proposal-related questions should be emailed to Abby Powell at [APowell@ThriveinSPI.org](mailto:APowell@ThriveinSPI.org)

All proposals should be submitted with the subject “Sangamon County Broadband Proposal” via email to [APowell@thriveinspi.org](mailto:APowell@thriveinspi.org).

### SECTION 4: GENERAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS

#### 4.1 Compliance with Laws – Consultant must agree to comply with all applicable federal, state, and local employment, nondiscrimination, benefits, taxation, and all other applicable laws.

#### 4.2 Non-Discrimination – In performing the services required under any agreement between SSGA and the consultant, the consultant shall not discriminate against any person on the basis of race, religion, creed, color, alienage, national origin, citizenship status, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, gender identity, age, ancestry, physical or mental disability, medical condition including medical characteristics, pregnancy, marital status, veteran status, or any other classification protected by applicable federal, state, or local laws.

- 4.3 No SSGA Obligation – This request for proposal does not commit SSGA to award a contract, to pay any costs incurred in the preparation of a response to this request, or to procure or contract for services or supplies.
- 4.4 SSGA Reservation of Rights – SSGA reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals received as a result of this request, to waive minor irregularities in the procedure, to negotiate with any qualified source including consultants providing proposals, or to cancel in part or in its entirety, this request for proposal. SSGA may require any consultant selected to participate in negotiations, and to submit such price, technical, or other revisions in their proposal as may result from negotiations.
- 4.5 Conflicts of Interest – No member, officer, director, or employee of the SSGA will have any financial interest, either direct or indirect, in any contract awarded pursuant to this request for proposal unless all such conflicts are approved by the SSGA Board of Directors in accordance with its applicable policies and procedures. No member, officer, director, or employee of the SSGA will exercise any undue influence in the awarding of any contract awarded pursuant to this request for proposal.
- 4.6 Amendments – This request for proposal may be amended by SSGA in response to need for further clarification, specifications and/or requirements changes, etc. Copies of the amendment will be provided to prospective consultants and must be signed and returned by the consultant as specified in the amendment. Consultant proposals may only be amended after submitting a later dated proposal that specifically states that it is amending an earlier proposal. No proposal may be amended after the Proposal Due Date unless requested by SSGA.
- 4.7 Withdrawal of Proposals – Proposals may be withdrawn only in total, and only by a written request to SSGA prior to the Proposal Due Date.
- 4.8 Request for Additional Information – SSGA reserves the right to request additional information as may reasonably be required to make its determinations and to further investigate the qualifications of any consultant, as SSGA deems appropriate.
- 4.9 Contractual Terms – Any contract awarded pursuant to this request for proposal will require certain consultant compliance with various obligations regarding insurance, indemnity of SSGA and its members, officers, directors, employees, and agents, non-discrimination, no assignment or sub-contracting, confirmation of independent contractor status, and other terms and conditions as may be required by SSGA.
- 4.10 Property – All proposals submitted in response to this request for proposal shall become the property of SSGA upon submission.