

Mars Hill, North Carolina



Request for Proposals (“RFP”)

For

Downtown Public Wi-Fi

Date issued: June 4, 2021

RFP Submission deadline: June 30, 2021

Sara Nichols
Land of Sky Regional Council
339 New Leicester Highway, Ste. 140
Asheville, NC, 28806
828-206-0884
sara@landofsky.org

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

SUBJECT: Installation, administration and upkeep of public Wi-Fi serving downtown Mars Hill, North Carolina.

INQUIRIES: All inquiries or questions must be directed to **Sara Nichols** as detailed in this document.

Questions regarding the RFP must be received at the following address no later than 5 p.m. on June 22, 2021. If a determination is made that a clarification or change to the RFP document is required, a written addendum will be posted on the appropriate sections of the websites of the issuers. Respondents are responsible for obtaining all RFP updates.

Responses must be delivered at the following address no later than 5 p.m. on June 30, 2021:

**Land of Sky Regional Council
339 New Leicester Highway, Ste. 140
Asheville, NC, 28806**

Submit one (1) hard copy and one (1) electronic copy (via email to sara@landofsky.org) of your response including any product literature or data.

Submittals must be labeled:

“RFP for Town of Mars Hill Downtown Public Wi-Fi Project”

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Town of Mars Hill, North Carolina, hereinafter referred to as “Town,” seeks solutions for creating and operating public Wi-Fi throughout downtown Mars Hill.

The Town has recognized the importance of access to Wi-Fi throughout downtown Mars Hill. The Town requires Wi-Fi coverage in the downtown area as detailed in Appendix “B.”

As a part of this RFP, the Town would like to see what other services may be offered, including:

- portals that allow for advertising graphics to be added
- services that prevent access to certain websites
- what types of “steady state” maintenance is available, what monthly maintenance services are provided, and at what rates.
- the ability to adjust Bandwidth for special events will be looked upon favorably.

The Town is also open to proposals where a provider installs a downtown public Wi-Fi system that could be managed on an ongoing basis by Town and Madison County IT personnel.

The Town issues this RFP to gather ideas and interest from providers of WI-FI services to enhance a patron’s experience while visiting downtown Mars Hill, which is located in Madison County, North Carolina. This RFP is intended to outline the market opportunity and invite interested providers to submit proposals for new Wi-Fi service delivery in downtown Mars Hill, NC. This process is an extremely important project to Mars Hill and Madison County, and responses are appreciated.

The Town seeks ideas and interest from respondents on how to achieve the objective of WI-FI service from Mars Hill Town Hall throughout downtown. WI-FI can include any type of solution that will allow patrons to seamlessly walk from area to area and always remain connected to the WI-FI network. The solution may consider that additional areas outside of the downtown area will be deployed and may offer commercial broadband services to residents and businesses that may be interested. Interested parties should provide information on how its services can meet the FCC’s broadband benchmark speeds of 25 megabits per second (Mbps) for downloads and 3 Mbps for uploads (https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-331760A1.pdf) or provide information as to what speeds the patrons will be able to achieve. Higher speed capabilities would be favorable to this project.

Note: The Town welcomes responses to this RFP from ALL interested parties. For the purposes of this RFP, the terms “respondents,” “providers,” and “vendors” refer to entities submitting written responses to this RFP. Funds to pay for these services have been provided through a grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission.

2. RFP TIMELINE

A. Important Dates

Publish RFP	Friday, June 4, 2021
Deadline for questions	Tuesday, June 22, 2021
Responses Due by 5 p.m.	Wednesday, June 30, 2021
Review completed by Town	Friday, July 19, 2021

B. Contact for questions and information requests should be directed to

Sara Nichols / Paul Moon
Land of Sky Regional Council
339 New Leicester Highway, Ste. 140
Asheville, NC, 28806
828-206-0884 / 828-230-3399
sara@landofsky.org / paul@landofsky.org

C. Further process

An electronic copy of the RFP may be downloaded from Land of Sky Regional Council website <http://www.landofsky.org/> and Town of Mars Hill website <https://townofmarshill.org/>. Access to Town data for the identification of demand and assets is available by request. Any amendment or addendum to this RFP is valid only if issued in writing by the Town of Mars Hill. Any changes in the process or updates to the schedule above will be posted on the websites above.

3. INFORMATION ON THE SITE

Mars Hill, North Carolina is a wonderful place to live, to work, and to raise a family. We have a strong focus on education, and a rich culture in the arts, with Mars Hill University exemplifying this tradition. We view ourselves as a very hardworking and creative community that cherishes its history, while maintaining a focus on our future. We are a growing town with an up-and-coming feel that is well-positioned for investment, growth, and development.

Mars Hill is a prime location for businesses that are looking to locate, relocate or expand. We offer companies access to a talented and skilled workforce. We also have affordable, flexible, and attractive real estate options. Mars Hill directly connects to Tennessee and the City of Asheville via the beautifully designed Interstate-26 and is within one and half-hours drive to two regional airports. The Town's infrastructure includes water, wastewater, and natural gas connections throughout the city limits.

Downtown Business Data

Population	2,746
Median household income	\$47,125
Number of Downtown Businesses	14

These factors contribute to the Town's interest in a WIFI solution that will serve patrons at the throughout downtown Mars Hill.

The Town is interested the following features:

1. Bandwidth increases that may be needed for special events.
2. Data collection on the users that may be utilizing the system.
3. Limits on access.

The Town is relying on the private sector in this effort, and is seeking Wi-Fi service providers to serve the downtown areas as described in Appendix "B." The Town believes that increased deployment of downtown Wi-Fi services is the key to fostering innovation by providing a resource that most patrons will use and sustain to stimulate economic growth. Respondents to this RFP should provide options or recommendations to provide service to the Town of Mars Hill as described in this document.

4. REQUESTED INFORMATION

4.1. Cover Sheet (Attachment A for Respondents)

4.1.1. Provide the full legal name of the Provider and the type of entity.

4.1.2. The cover sheet must be signed by an owner, corporate officer, or agent authorized by the Provider.

4.1.3. The names of all principals of the Provider must be disclosed on the cover sheet; specifically, all persons who have an equity interest in the Provider organization and/or hold a senior leadership position in the Provider organization.

4.2. Previous Experience

4.2.1. Identify previous experience in providing WIFI internet services and broadband content in other markets.

4.2.2. Identify customer segments served.

4.2.3. Provide services and content offered, including pricing and contract terms.

4.2.4. Provide customer service capabilities and technical support practices, including service standards.

4.2.5. Identify three references (names and contact information) who are familiar with your previous experience as a service provider.

4.3. Preliminary proposal for Wi-Fi service and portal deployment

4.3.1. Provide a detailed description of Internet service and broadband content you would propose to offer in the downtown Mars Hill, NC market, with details on how you may want to expand this service to address local Broadband needs.

4.3.2. What areas would you serve?

4.3.3. What services and content would you offer to provide a portal environment for advertising and message delivery, in addition to free Wi-Fi?

4.3.4. What Customer Service and Technical Support would you offer?

4.3.5. How and where would you staff this?

4.3.6. What service standards would you provide?

4.3.7 If submitting a proposal that allows Town/County staff to manage and oversee the downtown public Wi-Fi network on an ongoing basis, what training with the system would be necessary?

4.4. Other information, advice, or counsel you would offer to the Town of Mars Hill with respect to this project.

4.5. Please explain what types of support and cooperation you would be seeking from the Town to implement this project. (See Section 5. Areas of Cooperation.)

5. AREAS OF COOPERATION

To the extent not covered previously, this section highlights ways that the Town could cooperate with respondents to improve the business case for proposed solutions. We encourage respondents to be creative and suggest other types of partnerships or business opportunities of interest. Specifically, this section could include:

1. Resources and facilities: Explanation of need for access to town assets and resources. Respondents should also address the relative importance and impact of variations in terms of more flexibility with respect to accessing the following types of community assets, facilities, and policies:

- a. Pole Attachments
- b. Utility conduits
- c. Dark fiber
- d. Backhaul or ISP partnerships involving local, statewide or regional fiber assets
- e. Public rights of way
- f. Undergrounding policies
- g. Other community assets, facilities (including radio towers) or policies not specifically mentioned above.

2. Regulatory environment: Description of any rules or regulations at the federal, state or local level that could impact the feasibility or underlying economics associated with the proposed solutions. Responses should also include an explanation of any forms of proposed regulatory relief, including streamlined permitting, which could improve the economic case for the business models or network solutions proposed or for other network solutions that respondents considered but dismissed due to existing regulations and their effect on economic viability of such proposal.

3. Contracting issues: Explanation of any material considerations or expectations that respondents have with respect to any of the following issues likely to be negotiated.

- a. Intellectual property
- b. Insurance
- c. Indemnities
- d. Warranties
- e. Dispute resolution
- f. Problems with current providers if any.
- g. Other contracting issues not specifically listed above.

4. Other partnership or revenue opportunities: Discussion of any other types of partnerships or working relationships between respondents and supporters which could improve the business case for respondents to partner with one or more supporters.

6. TERMS, CONDITIONS AND DISCLAIMERS FOR RFP

Responses to this RFP become the exclusive property of the Town of Mars Hill, NC. All documents submitted in response to this RFP may be regarded as public records and may be subject to disclosure. No material submitted in response to this RFP will be returned. Respondents are solely responsible for all expenses associated with responding to this RFP.

A. Confidentiality

All submissions are subject to North Carolina Public Records Law. To the extent that respondents desire to submit proprietary information to the Town of Mars Hill represents that it will use all reasonable efforts to claim available exemptions under the North Carolina Public Records Law (NCPL), and will notify the affected respondent if an NCPL request is received in connection with that proprietary information. The respondent will be given an opportunity to seek court action to prevent release of information. All materials that the respondent believes are proprietary MUST be labeled "CONFIDENTIAL." The Town cannot guarantee that its efforts to claim available exemptions will be successful and the Town may be required to disclose the respondent's information, even that which is labeled proprietary, privileged and/or confidential.

B. Incurred Costs

The Town will not be liable in any way for any costs incurred by respondents in replying to this RFP, including, but not limited to, costs associated with preparing the response or participating in any site visits, demonstrations, conferences, or oral presentations.

7. SELECTION PROCESS

A Committee Selected by Town Authorities will review the Proposals and select firms to be interviewed, if needed. Committee members will be present for any interviews. Interviews, if required, are scheduled to take place during the week of July 5, 2021. The Committee will review and approve the Contract for Services and contact the selected firm by July 19, 2021. The Provider will begin work following the signing of the Contract and filing of appropriate paperwork. Ability to get services up quickly and effectively will be favorable.

Primary consideration will be given to the general appropriateness of the proposal for the project, the technical competence and creative ability of the consultants (as described in the proposal) and the firm's willingness to work closely with Town Staff. The Town reserves the right to reject all proposals that are inappropriate or inadequate.

Timeline for acceptance:

Responses Due by 5 p.m.	Wednesday, June 30, 2021
Selection Committee Recommendation	Friday, July 19, 2021
Contract Negotiation with Successful Proposer	To Be Determined
Approval/Notice to Proceed	To Be Determined
Equipment Installed	To Be Determined
Service Available to Downtown	To Be Determined
Project Closeout	To Be Determined

Appendix A – Cover Sheet

Name of Person, Business or Organization	
Type of Entity (e.g. Sole Proprietorship, Partnership, Corp., Nonprofit, Public Agency, etc.)	
Federal Tax ID number	
Contact Person – Name	
Contact Person – Address	
Contact Person – Phone number(s)	
Contact Person – email address	

By signing this **Cover Sheet** I hereby attest: that I have read and understood all the terms listed in the RFP and I have read and understood all terms listed in this request.

Signature of Authorized Representative

Appendix B – Areas to be covered

Wi-Fi has become one of the driving forces that enable economic expansion, increased foot traffic, and diversity of available products/services in the downtown corridor. The Town of Mars Hill is seeking to attract providers that could offer service within targeted areas from Mars Hill Town Hall throughout downtown Mars Hill, NC. This Appendix details the broad area encompassed within the scope of what the town plans to implement, and the areas of greatest importance to this project. The defined areas below are the minimum necessary to fulfill the requirements and expectations of this downtown Wi-Fi project.

The yellow outlined area represents the “foot-traffic” area of downtown. The Town is seeking a Wi-Fi deployment that provides adequate coverage to support the number of contiguous users as described on page six of this RFP, with Wi-Fi coverage in all available A, B, G, and N WIFI bands of a minimum of -60dBm across the areas defined below within the yellow outline.

Focus area: The area as defined on the map to include Main Street from the intersection at Carl Eller Road to Town Hall at 280 North Main Street. Across the intersection at Carl Eller Road to include the visitors center. Land of Sky Regional Council and Town of Mars Hill will work with partners to leverage resources such as buildings and vertical assets to support this project.

