

**AVERY COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

**AVERY COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE DESIRES TO ENGAGE INTERNET
SERVICE PROVIDERS TO PROVIDE HIGH SPEED INTERNET TO PORTIONS OF
THE COUNTY.**

The Avery County Chamber of Commerce (“Chamber”) has received a grant in the amount of \$100,000 from the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) to extend broadband internet service to residential and business customers in unserved and underserved areas of Avery County.

A citizen telecommunications survey conducted in 2015 identified portions of Avery County in which residents reported inadequate broadband internet service. The areas are generally displayed on the attached map. The Chamber is looking for a qualified Partner with the technical expertise and capacity to make available high-speed internet services to as much of the identified underserved areas as possible. The qualified Partner would be required to design, build, operate and maintain a broadband network to provide data services. The Partner would also be required to provide a minimum of \$100,000 to match the ARC funds. Per ARC regulations, the Chamber will own all equipment purchased with grant and match funds for five years, after which time the equipment will be transferred to the project Partner.

Scope of Services:

The Chamber is looking for a qualified internet provider (Partner) to design, build, and maintain broadband infrastructure to connect previously identified unserved and underserved areas of Avery County. Method of internet service delivery shall be identified by the Partner in their proposal. The goal of this project is to provide affordable, adequate internet access to as many unserved and underserved residents and businesses as possible.

The selected Partner must display capacity to accomplish the following services:

1. Design a network that is cost-effective and which provides redundancy
2. Develop environmental documents, project recommendations, and cost estimates
3. Prepare detailed design and construction plans, technical specifications, and documents
4. Act as project manager for all construction phases
5. Provide on-site construction inspections and management
6. Conduct system performance tests
7. Conduct final project inspections and prepare final construction report
8. Maintain the equipment needed to provide retail broadband services to residential and business customers
9. Providing management functions of the service provision, including sales, billing and customer service

Project Schedule

Proposal submittal deadline	March 30, 2018
Contract with selected Partner	June 1, 2018
Project design complete	September 1, 2018
Project construction complete	May 31, 2019

Proposal Requirements

Proposal submissions must include:

1. Description of the company, including location, number of employees, number of years experience providing internet access, available resources, and other information necessary to determine to capacity of the company to properly execute the work proposed
2. Description of past company record of network reliability and customer satisfaction
3. Business and technical plan describing the method to conduct the Scope of Services above
4. Description of anticipated technology to be utilized in project
5. Anticipated service speeds provided to customers
6. Description of anticipated area to be served
7. Commitment of matching funds for the project
8. Detailed timeline of project

Evaluation

The following criteria and associated importance will be used to evaluate proposals and select a Partner:

- Capability to perform all aspects of the project (15%)
- Ability to meet project schedule (10%)
- Displayed history of network reliability and customer satisfaction (10%)
- Cost-effectiveness of anticipated technology (5%)
- Matching funds committed (10%)
- Ability to offer service to the largest amount of unserved/underserved residents/businesses (10%)
- Anticipated service speed (10%)
- Capacity to supply and maintain the equipment installed (5%)
- Relevant experience and expertise (5%)
- Experience partnering with local governments and non-profits on projects (10%)
- Experience working with Federal grant programs (5%)
- Quality and responsiveness of proposal (5%)

The selected qualified Partner will be invited to negotiate a contract with the Avery County Chamber of Commerce. Should the Chamber and the selected Partner not be able to reach an agreement, the Chamber will then select another company. The Chamber reserves the right to discontinue the selection process at any time prior to the awarding of a contract.

Proposal Submissions

Proposals must be received no later than 5:00 pm March 30, 2018.

Submit proposals to:

Avery County Broadband Expansion Project
Avery County Chamber of Commerce
Melynda Pepple, Director
4501 Tynecastle Highway, Unit #2
Banner Elk, NC 28604
director@averycounty.com

Faxed proposals will not be accepted. Proposals received after the closing date will not be reviewed.

Additional Information

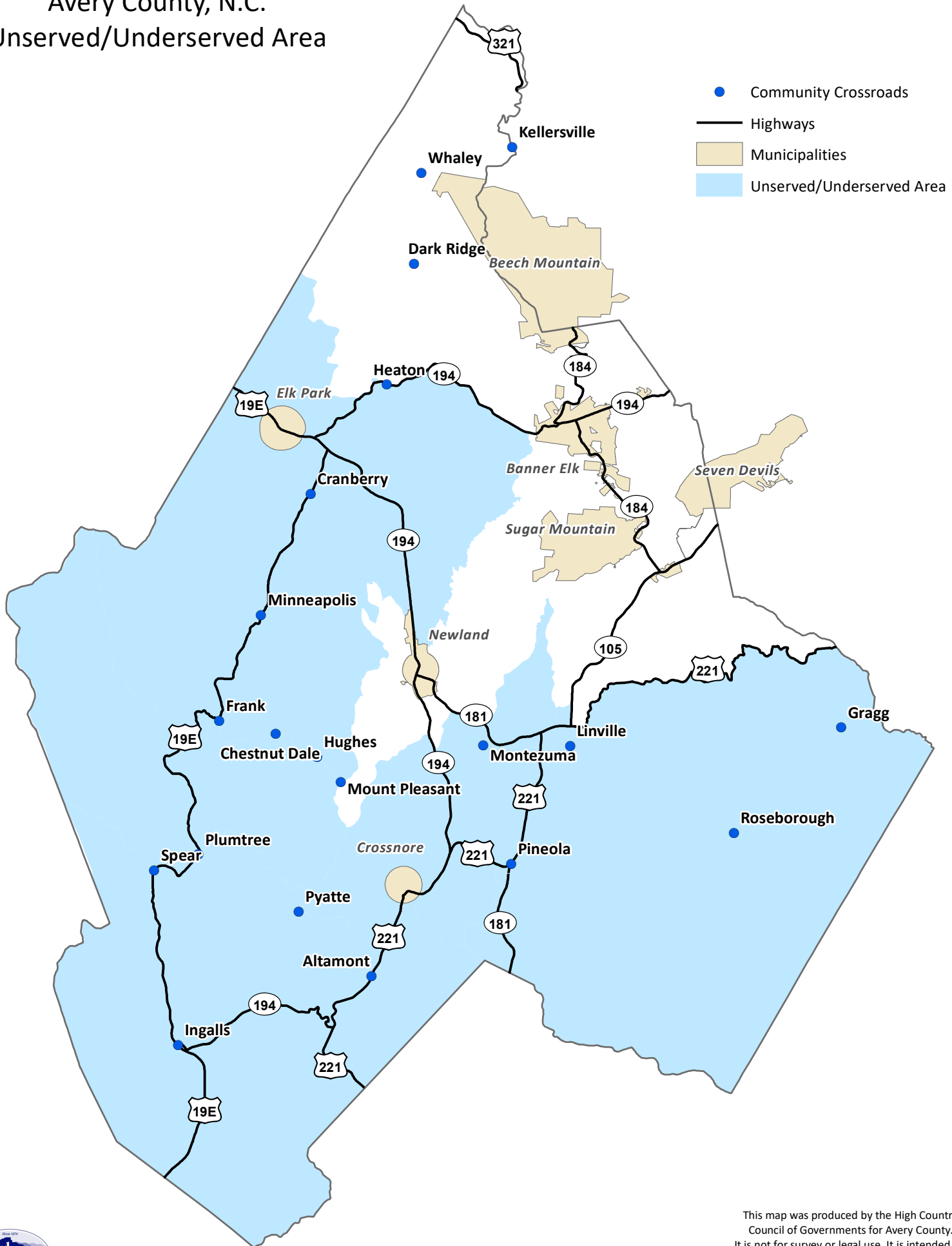
Applicants may contact Melynda Pepple at (828) 898-5605 or Michelle Ball at (828) 265-5434 ext. 115 for additional information.

Reservation of Rights

This Request for Proposals (RFP) does not commit the Chamber 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. The Chamber reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals received as a result of this request, or to cancel in part or in its entirety this RFP. The Chamber reserves the right to undertake such investigation as it deems necessary to verify the qualifications of the company for the project.

Avery County, N.C.

Unserved/Underserved Area



This map was produced by the High Country Council of Governments for Avery County. It is not for survey or legal use. It is intended for display, reference and planning purposes only. February 15, 2018