

NWFX RFI Responses

Date: December 5, 2022

#	Question	Response
1	1,400 route miles are planned to pass 28,000 premises. Can an overall design, including meet points, beyond the trunk depicted in the RFI be provided?	Following a mutual NDA and additional discussion, NWFX intends to share all information necessary for operational analysis.
2	The number of premises passed, and miles of plant seem to include a significant number of served portions of the ' 'CUD's territory as outlined as Distribution Areas in the RFI. The NWFX website indicates revenue bonds will be a funding source. Can the funding source(s) planned for the three-year build cycle, and in particular the overbuild areas, be provided to help us better understand the risk profile? If the NWFX Business Plan on the website is current and the VCBB grant process does not yield the anticipated amount identified, is there a backup plan for funding?	45% of our project is currently allocated by the VCBB. It is anticipated that 50-60% of the build-out to be funded by VCBB Grants. Additional funding sources may include traditional leading, municipal revenue bonding, ARPA contributions, USDA Grants, and VC funding.  We are working closely with the Vermont Community Foundation and the VCBB's Broadband Project Developer/Innovative Finance to determine creative solutions with minimized risk for overbuild funding.
3	The NWFX website states fees, ISP, and infrastructure costs will be far below other ISPs. Have any surveys of interest or thresholds for pricing/speed been conducted that CUD members would find attractive that can be shared? The NWFX website indicates a 45% penetration rate by year 5, what information is this based on?	The infrastructure fee was a web content oversight, relevant only for a prior business plan iteration. Good catch!  NWFX and our partners have conducted surveys and market analyses for pricing-sensitive and anticipated take rates.
4	The planned backbone fiber routing is planned where it is not clear/known if infrastructure exists (e.g., Milton-South Hero Causeway, pole routes between distribution utilities, etc.). How will these areas be addressed by the CUD for the ringed architecture?	Should NWFX encounter design challenges we will seek various options, included leases on existing fiber infrastructure.
5	What is envisioned for integration with the CUD NOC and where will the NOC be located? Would the tenant have input on the location/design of meet points? Will the tenant have input on acceptance criteria for infrastructure constructed by the CUD?	TBD, contingent upon tenants and O&M vendor.  Input from tenants will be taken into consideration.
6	Non-VCBB qualified premises drops are to be the responsibility of the tenant. NWFX website states drops up to 500 Ft, aerial or underground (inc. conduit), will be free to the premises owner. Has a study been completed to determine the amount of aerial vs underground? Will the tenant own the drop infrastructure as it is self-funded?	The average driveway length in NW is 440 ft. While no study has been completed on aerial/underground "drops" it is expected much of the district to be > 90% aerial.  While we have placed a framework for "drops," we have not adopted a formal policy and are open to discussion with tenants.  The tenant would own the "drop" if self-funded.
7	What are the envisioned terms of customer service and support service level agreements? The NWFX website indicates 99.99%+ connectivity, how will this be measured?	TBD, contingent upon tenants and O&M vendor.
8	Given that the unserved premises are spread across the ' 'CUD's territory, can a build plan (Phases) and	Yes, following a mutual NDA and additional discussion.

	schedule, even if draft, be provided as to the construction sequence?	
9	The agreement is nonexclusive and subsequent ISPs will be allowed to pick certain distribution areas. Will there be an offset to the per-passing rate for the anchor tenant, especially every premises that takes Service from the subsequent (competitive) ISP? When is it envisioned the per-passing fee would begin?	Following a mutual NDA and additional discussion, NWFx intends to share our per-passing structure for both anchor and selective DA rates.
10	Since the CUD is constructing and owning the FTTP infrastructure, what rights-of-entry agreements are envisioned that the tenant would ideally secure on behalf of the CUD?	Property owner's right of entry and/or landlord's letter of permission. If necessary or required, a property easement.
11	What is envisioned with the quarterly audit rights?	TBD, open for discussion but is identified as a necessary measure to ensure both operational and financial accuracy.
12	Is the right of the CUD to approve a transfer of tenant ownership of CUD subscribers a non-negotiable anticipated term?	We may consider other options, but not without sacrificing our ability to protect the network and consumers.
13	Detailed and comprehensive cyber security and recovery plans would be considered proprietary. We can attest to having practices in-place that are consistent with industry standards. Would this be acceptable?	Agreed, cyber security and recovery plans are proprietary.  Our greater concern is that of the consumer, Privacy, and User Data policies.
14	Right for CUD to take over services in the event of a default. Does this mean tenant's owned equipment and drops it self-funded?	The CUD seeks the right to participate in the sale of assets in the event of a default, including self-funded assets.
15	Have any aerial and/or underground conditions studies been completed? If yes, can they be provided?	No
16	The RFI is unclear if the tenant or the CUD will purchase, install, and operate such devices as OLTs. Can we be provided clarification?	Tenant is responsible for all equipment from the terminal to end-user. Additional discussion is needed.
17	The RFI contemplates the tenant will have resources located in the 'CUD's territory. We agree this is an eventual, but we see this tied to growth. Will this be acceptable, or must the tenant have a physical presence at the onset? Placing resources early in a project like this will only add unnecessary costs and potentially hurt sustainability.	Open for further discussion.  Should a tenant have resources adjacent to the district with plans to add in-district resources based on growth, that may be acceptable.  We seek to break the cycle of 1-2+ week wait time for a service call. An all-too-common practice today.
18	Will the anchor tenant have input/control on acceptance criteria for CUD constructed infrastructure?	Input from tenants will be taken into consideration.
19	The NWFx website also states the ISP will provide the WiFi router. Is this a current condition of NWFx? If so, will the premises owner be responsible for replacement?	Again, this may be a web content oversight issue or terminology difference.  But it is expected that tenants provide all necessary CPE or allow customer-owned if that is the practice of the ISP.
20	Does NWFx expect that this same construction vendor will also deliver drops during the construction phase for pre-signups?	No  Our preference is for the responsibility of "drops" to be that of the tenants.

		An agreement could be made with our construction vendor to meet the need of tenants for pre-subs, but additional discussion is needed.
21	Is the intention that the ISP operator will be responsible for drops after the construction phase?	Yes
22	Has consideration been given to underground and drops exceeding '250' and how these will be funded?	While we have placed a framework for "drops", we have not adopted a formal policy and are open to discussion with tenants.
23	Will NWFx have any employees to manage the relationship between the ISP and the VCBB?	Yes
24	Is the design of the network (inclusive of pole data gathering and surveying) also complete? If not, when is that anticipated? Any successful implementation of NWFx plans will require close collaboration between the design team and the network operator; what specific mechanism has NWFx considered to ensure such a linkage takes place?	Following a mutual NDA and additional discussion, NWFx intends to share all information necessary for operational analysis.
25	If design is complete, has a construction vendor been selected? If so, when is construction anticipated to commence?	At this time, a construction vendor has not been selected. Project management, design, sequencing, permitting, and materials procurement are underway. It is anticipated 2023-Q2.
26	We want to confirm that within the RFP you have not asked specifically for any pricing of services or deep technical and/or operational details. Are we correct in this assessment of the RFP? The reason for this question is to first make sure we are providing a comprehensive response and second to assure NWFx can absolutely turn these details around quickly as requested per a given process that is established by NWFx.	Correct, the intent of this RFI is to solicit interest and to engage in additional more in-depth conversations following December 9 <sup>th</sup> , 2022.
27	Is Northwest Fiberworx open to receiving alternative proposals under this RFI that do not perfectly align with the framework laid out in the RFI but may represent an overall cost savings to the CUD and a faster time to market?	We are open to alternate proposals.
28	Is Northwest Fiberworx willing to extend the RFI deadline to January 9th to give us more time to assemble all information and engineering relevant for our RFI response and to account for the holiday season?	We will not be extending the RFI deadline. The RFI was built not to be onerous, an intent of interest, seeking to engage further.
29	We have discussed various opportunities to work in tandem with the CUD. One of those opportunities is regarding "end user anchor tenants". We had discussed the CUD assisting with the outreach to these tenants. Although the ISP will provide the marketing information, is the CUD willing to assist in attainment of long term, SLA dependent contracts with these entities: a. School districts b. Municipalities c. Counties d. Healthcare providers/clinic/hospitals e. Emergency services	Open for further discussion. This may require additional resources.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>f. College campuses and branches</li> <li>g. State facilities located within NWFx</li> <li>h. Airports</li> <li>i. Libraries</li> <li>j. Enterprise (employers of ten or more)</li> </ul>	
30	<p>Participate in the Affordable Connectivity Program. We have discussed the anchor tenants carrying the bulk of the revenue of the system, which ties this question in with item 1. above. The definition afforded by the Vermont website is a bit ambiguous: (<a href="https://publicservice.vermont.gov/content/affordable-connectivity-program">https://publicservice.vermont.gov/content/affordable-connectivity-program</a>) and states that a household qualifies when at least one member has an income at or below 200% of federal poverty guidelines. There is no definition of "member"...accordingly a child is a member of the household and has no income...how is this being addressed as every household could qualify with that interpretation? Second question on this topic, we are assuming that the discount is simply a discount and therefore if Service were to retail for \$50 for example, the \$30 discount would a net \$20 bill to the customer. The \$30 discount is billed separately to the state? Our goal would be to attain enough anchor tenants that the \$30 may actually be the extent of the fees to the home...in that case, how are we handling the per home passed fee?</p>	<p>From our analysis based on the latest income data provided by the 2020 US Census, approximately 24% of households would qualify for ACP.</p> <p>The ACP reduction would be to the discretion of the ISP.</p> <p>As a condition of our VCBB grants, our network tenants must participate in ACP.</p>
31	<p>Provide universal Service. Actually, this is in reference to a complete build that is ready to connect to each address...funding of which is outside the scope of this RFI...am I correct in that assumption? This is not limited to unserved/underserved.</p>	<p>Universal Service, as defined by NWFx is that service must be provided equally. (Service can't be different from house to house)</p> <p>Universal Service, as defined by the VCBB is a plan to address all under/unserved addresses. It is the intent of NWFx to build all locations not currently served with fiber.</p>
32	<p>When we discuss "enterprise" services, the endpoints may be wireless in nature (Smart City, Industry 4.0 for example). Will NWFx partner with us on the presentation of those endpoints which add revenue to the fiber network? Meaning will you assist in marketing assuming we provide the materials?</p>	<p>Open for further discussion. This may require additional resources.</p>