CITY OF WEST DES MOINES: REQUEST FOR INFORMATION ON BROADBAND PILOT

Request for Information for Coordination, Collaboration and/or Partnership between the City of West Des Moines and Private Sector Entities for the Acceleration of Broadband Deployment, Enhancement of Wireless Services and Innovation in Service Delivery in West Des Moines generally, as well as specifically to the Valley Junction Area and Low/Moderate Income Students Attending Hillside Elementary.

The City of West Des Moines is seeking ideas from the private sector with regard to ways that the public and private sectors can work together, with the City as facilitator, enabler, and potential partner to the private sector, in accelerating broadband deployment, enhancing wireless network infrastructure and advancing innovation in the provision of services to targeted populations.

Timeline: While the City of West Des Moines reserves the right to modify the schedule of events for this RFI at its sole discretion, the following is the estimated timeline for discussion, issuance, consideration and responses:

- Initial introductions and discussion   10/9/2017 2:00 – 3:30 p.m.
- RFI Issuance   12/21/2017
- Deadline for questions from responders   1/15/2018
- RFI responses due to City   1/22/2018

The City will review responses to this RFI and may provide more detailed information on available City assets and ask one or more respondents to refine their responses. The City may also issue a more detailed Request for Proposal (RFP) relating to this project in February of 2018, cancel or delay plans for this initiative, or choose another direction that is deemed in the community's best interest.

No contract will be awarded as a result of this RFI. Further, there is no guarantee an RFP will be developed as a result of this RFI. The City reserves the right to withdraw the RFI or any subsequent RFP, or decline to award a contract.

I. Introduction

 In December 2016 WestLAB (West Des Moines Leadership Advisory Board) met to review and advise on the economic and development planning for the City of West Des Moines. An issue that was called out for additional discussion and potential action was the City's positioning and planning for increased broadband and "connectivity" capacity. WestLAB's opinion was that broadband infrastructure and services were now the "4th Utility" that a City would need to show "excellence" on in order to retain and recruit new businesses and citizens.

At WestLAB's request a review of "connectivity" was undertaken and several early conclusions were reached:

- Given the increasing consumer and business appetite for internet/telecom access and speed and the increasing number of devices seeking access, the only infrastructure predicted to be able to meet West Des Moines needs is fiber optic cable (broadband). Referred to as 'future proofing', the design requires extensive access within the community to optical fibers which in turn allow for significantly more production and flexibility than other existing systems. The scientific consensus is that of existing, viable technologies, only fiber can support the growth and the "whenever, wherever, however" demand for "connectivity" that West Des Moines' emerging creative economy will demand.
- The primary strategy used by "small" communities on broadband is to "build their own". This strategy was determined as not viable for West Des Moines due to both its size and the unusually high level of broadband complexity/demand in the local economy (one-size-won't-fit-all).
- The primary strategy used by "large" communities was to facilitate access to relatively dense populations for market leaders/innovators (think "Google fiber" comes to Kansas City). The apparent "minimum population" needed for this strategy seemed to be a community of 500,000 or greater, which was obviously beyond West Des Moines capacity.
- West Des Moines needed to create a "middle-path", one which combined both public and private sectors into a "connectivity collaboration".
- Likely the most effective (and simplest) over-all strategy for the City would be to create an environment where new broadband investment is easier, faster and lower cost to do in West Des Moines than anywhere else (i.e., move WDM to the "head of the line" for investment).
- Within that overall strategy there would be potentially three specific efforts to "kick start" the collaborative environment:
    - ➢ Identify all existing carriers/providers either already in West Des Moines (or who should have interest in serving West Des Moines) and create a facilitated discussion on the needs, plans and timing of future connectivity investments in West Des Moines.
    - ➢ Identify existing City assets which could be used to collaborate on new connectivity investments and a means to make those available for expansion efforts without impacting the integrity of public safety needs.
    - ➢ Review and update all City regulations, ordinances, permits and procedures that could impact connectivity investments to integrate technological and regulatory changes, reduce time and costs for both City and carriers and positively impact City Council goals.

On October 9, 2017 the West Des Moines City Manager convened an exploratory meeting of telecom/broadband providers and City staff experts. The purpose of the meeting was to determine if there existed sufficient opportunity for, and interest in, such public/private collaborations. The clear consensus of the discussion was that the opportunities presented were significant, that the interest level of the private sector was high and that City should continue its efforts.

II. Goals

In pursuing this Initiative the City's goals include, but are not limited to, the following:

- To maximize its processes and structures to best enable and facilitate new and cost-effective broadband, wireless and service options in the City and determine strategies by which to make itself as friendly as possible to private broadband investment.
- To utilize its assets, capabilities, and other attributes to enable deployment of new and cost-effective broadband, wireless and service options in the City. Among other assets, the City may be able to make use of right-of-way, conduit, fiber, and wireless siting locations.
- To consider, if appropriate, capital contributions toward one or more projects presented. With respect to cost, the City is interested in various financially sustainable business models that further the City's goals and can easily be scaled. The City seeks partnerships with private entities that will ensure the sustainability of any services deployed under this initiative.
- To gain input from potential collaborators or partners regarding the terms and conditions under which they would participate in such projects. The City seeks responses from potential partners with a variety of business models that share technological and operational responsibilities and financial risk between the partners and the City in innovative ways.
- To increase connectivity for its underserved and underrepresented residents by enabling low cost or free access in underserved, disadvantaged and at risk areas of the City. Such connectivity/access may include, but is not limited to, low/moderate income household access, tele-work/tele-center support, community WiFi, small business/entrepreneurial assistance/incentives, and other aspects deemed critical for access to economic opportunity.
- To discover how technological advances in fiber, wireless, sensors, big data analytics, and connected devices can create new avenues for the City improve services and meet the needs and demands of its growing population.
- To encourage respondents to share their expertise, which may be used to shape the direction and form of the public-private collaboration the City seeks. The City further seeks to encourage respondents to work together on responses to this RFI if a collaborative approach would best meet the City's goals.
- To learn more about what assets and contributions would facilitate the deployment of the provider's solution. Respondents should discuss permitting, rights-of-way, property usage, conduit access, fiber connections, electricity requirements, and any other required or beneficial contributions.

III. Broadband Equity Becomes a Critical Issue

Just as leaders began to identify areas *of* the City where broadband services were weak and creating an impediment to economic growth, it also became clear that there were populations *within* the City for

who a lack of broadband services was creating an economic and social challenge. In an effort to determine the most effective means to integrate "broadband equity" into the overall Broadband Acceleration Initiative already underway in the community, the following steps were taken:

➢ City Manager's Office and consultant began analyzing various locations within West Des Moines as a possible location for a broadband acceleration pilot. That pilot could include, but would not necessarily be limited to, low/moderate income household access, tele-work/tele-center support, community WiFi, small business/entrepreneurial assistance/incentives, and other broadband service aspects that could be particularly assistive to low and moderate income households.

➢ City Manager's Office and consultant began overlaying economic, infrastructural and demographic analysis to locations capable of supporting such a pilot.

➢ City Manager's Office and consultant looked at various means to "layer" financial assistance and sustainable support mechanisms.

IV. Valley Junction Opportunity Comes into Focus

Based upon initial analysis, the consensus was that the neighborhood known as "Valley Junction" would provide the best opportunity for a successful and impactful pilot. A few of the aspects deemed important included:

➢ It's History. Valley Junction is the historical City Center of West Des Moines. It was founded in 1893 just to the West of Des Moines, Iowa at the "Valley Junction" railroad station. Known as the City of Valley Junction for the first 40 years, it was the site of the first City Hall, City Library and Fire Station. In 1938, it changed its name to West Des Moines.

➢ It's Size and Topography.   At roughly 12 blocks by 15 blocks with a mainly flat topography (with a rise on its north side) it is a site with relatively few barriers for technology.

➢ It's Demography. The City of West Des Moines covers 14 census tracts, comprised of 39 census blocks. One-third of the highest low/moderate percentage census blocks in West Des Moines exist within or adjacent to Valley Junction.

➢ It's Lay-out. At the south-center of Valley Junction is the historic "downtown" business district, with the residential areas bordering it on three sides. There is an unusually strong bond between the residential and business districts in Valley Junction.

➢ It's "left behind" Status. In 1950 West Des Moines had 5,600 residents, the largest number located in Valley Junction.   By 2010 it had 56,000 residents, with little of that increase in Valley Junction. During the last decade it has been the fastest growing community in the state. As commercial, retail, industrial, housing and then finally … City Government itself … "grew west", fewer and fewer investments, including telecom and broadband, were made in Valley Junction.

➢ What it is. In addition to its history, Valley Junction has one other distinction for the City. From a workforce perspective It is seen as the source of the most affordable single-family homes in the community.

V. Hillside Elementary as a Pilot Within the Pilot

As City leadership further analyzed this Valley Junction Pilot Project opportunity, the issue of "over-reaching" arose. The concern was that attempting to respond to <u>all</u> the potential broadband equity issues in Valley Junction could mean spreading focus and resources so thin that we might not meaningfully impact <u>any</u> of the equity issues, or even develop enough reliable data to determine the impact of efforts undertaken. As the community searched for a demonstration topic to pilot broadband equity efforts, education rose to the top. In addition to the compelling general data about the impact of education on economic equity (and broadband on education), the following Valley Junction specific information existed:

- ➤ The elementary school that serves Valley Junction is called Hillside Elementary. 61.7 % of the 595 students at Hillside qualify for the federal free/reduced lunch program, the highest percentage of any elementary school in West Des Moines.
- ➤ The Iowa Department of Education's 2016 aggregate scores for West Des Moines Elementary Schools range from a high of 70.5 to a low of 64.1 (with the low being Hillside Elementary).
- ➤ While there are challenges, Hillside Elementary is still part of an extensive financial and training support eco-system within the West Des Moines Community Schools, and part of an extensive data and measurement process as part of the Iowa Department of Education.
- ➤ Contemplating anticipated financial parameters, Hillside Elementary appears "doable":
  - From an "administration" stand-point, the implementation of any broadband equity effort could "piggy-back" on their existing administration of "free/reduced" lunch and related programming (with some flexibility for non-free/reduced children with extenuating circumstances).
  - Hillside is also located on a city owned conduit/fiber ring which surrounds the borders of Valley Junction, providing a low cost/no cost means of backhaul of data from student residence to the school system. There is also access to City right-of-way and other possibly needed infrastructures, again at low/no cost.
  - Its demographics and economic status of student households, coupled with the public purpose of education, creates avenues for additional funding which could be accessed by City to (a) protect against unforeseen costs in the short term; and (b) become a source of funds for long term sustainability and expansion after the pilot period.
  - There are ISP carriers who have expressed an interest in "pilot" undertakings in West Des Moines, including Valley Junction, if City and partners could help reduce CapEx and OpEx costs during the early period of development. That would be possible within this pilot.
  - The City can provide support for any students in difficult to reach residences or during temporary interruptions at a residence through a new "hot spot" check out program through the local public library.

VI. Needs and Support Available

The intent of this pilot would be to determine over a three-year period the process and costs for reaching and maintaining broadband connections to low/moderate income households for purposes of 24/7 access to the internet via connection through Hillside Elementary. The minimum connection level we would seek is 5Mb.

Based on the most recent information, in year 1 there are 226 households in the Hillside Elementary boundary that would need to be reached, and another 34 households in adjacent areas. Approximately 50 new qualifying students enroll each year.

The following information is available upon request:

- A GIS map of the locations of households to be connected.
- A map of City/Valley Junction conduit, fiber, ROW and other infrastructures an ISP may wish to take advantage of.
- A description of CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) funds that could be made available to off-set infrastructure/equipment costs.
- A description of philanthropic funds which could be available to subsidize access for low/moderate income households.

The City and its partners are open to alternative technologies and systems for providing connection. The City and partners are open to respondents providing service to other households or businesses within Valley Junction community (without the "subsidized access" portion of assistance). The City and partners are generally interested in a timeline for activity as follows:

- December 21, 2017. City issues a general RFI to interested carriers/providers outlining the support and facilities available to them and the needed connectivity for the demonstration project. It would have a January 22, 2018 response date.
- January 29/30, 2018. City of West Des Moines and funding partners review the RFI summaries, conduct a site visit to "ground truth" and refine the project and assist City Staff in developing an RFP.
- February 1, 2018 through March 15 , RFP is issued and strategy discussions between private/city/state/federal partners continue.
- March 15, 2018 through May 15, 2018. City and funding partners select approach/vendor(s) and draft definitive agreements. City undertakes development and submission of a CDBG (community block grant development) application by City to support hard infrastructure and outreach for the project.
- June 1, 2018. "Close" the project by completion of agreements and contribution of funds by partners to agreed party (likely *Historic Valley Junction Foundation* or *West Des Moines Community Schools Foundation*)

- June 1, 2018 through August 15, 2018 partner and ISP implementation meetings

- Implementation testing September 15, 2018

- Pilot full implementation October 15, 2018

- Interim results report developed quarterly through January, 2021

- March 2021 proposed continuation/termination/modification report by partners to City Council

- July 2021, pilot ends

VII Response

The City of West Des Moines requests the following information—in as much detail as is practicable—from respondents.

1. **Cover Letter:** Please include company name, address of corporate headquarters, address of nearest local office, contact name for response, and that person's contact information (address, phone, cell, email, other).

2. **Business Structure:** Summarize the business approach and business model you would use for the project and describe what areas of the City this approach would apply to. How would your business plan help to meet the City's goals? What are the key assumptions? What are your main areas of risk, and how can the City help reduce the risks?

3. **Summary of Technical Approach:** At a high level, summarize the technical approach you would use for this project, such as:

    a. How would you use technology to meet the City's goals?

    b. What approach would you use to interconnect with the Internet and other public networks?

    c. Provide proposed network diagrams.

4. **Summary of Operational Approach:** At a high level, summarize the operational approach you would use for this project, such as:

    a. Describe the nature of the service and the connection speeds.

    b. Describe how the targeted populations would access the service.

    c. How would you perform network management?

    d. What would be the recurring costs for the service and how would those costs be paid for? What are the key technical assumptions upon which these costs are based?

5. **Schedule:** Describe your proposed schedule for implementing this project. Offer a timeline with key milestones.

6. **Maintenance:** If you are proposing to perform system/network maintenance, describe your ability to perform maintenance on an ongoing and as-needed basis. Provide estimates of the operating cost of maintenance and include your main assumptions. If you are not performing maintenance, who is?

7. **Data Privacy, Security, and Ownership:** Describe your ability to provide secure services or infrastructure that complies with industry best practices.

8. **Financing and Funding:** Discuss how you intend to fund the project development and list any requirements , financial or in-kind, the City must meet for you to partner with the City on this project. (If you do not address this question, it will be assumed that you have no contribution or financial requirements whatsoever of the City). Address how you intend to finance the project, and from what sources you may obtain financing. Discuss any payments the City or other parties may have to make to support the service. (A one-page flow chart that shows the flow of all funds between all parties in your response would be preferred).

9. **Experience:** Provide a statement of experience discussing past performance, capabilities, and qualifications. Identify any similar systems, networks or innovations your firm has designed, built, maintained, or operated. Discuss partnerships with other service providers, government, or nonprofit entities you have undertaken, particularly any involving similar services outlined in your response. For entities currently providing communication/broadband services in or near the City of West Des Moines, describe your current service footprint in the City, including a description of the type of infrastructure and services you currently offer and the technology platform(s) used. Explain how your firm is a suitable partner for this project.

Please send the RFI response by email in PDF format to Kristy Henning at kristy.henning@wdm.iowa.gov

If your proposal contains information that is exempt from disclosure under Iowa's public records law, Chapter 22, Iowa Code, please provide an additional redacted PDF with a cover letter stating the legal rationale for redaction.

Questions related to this RFI may be addressed to David Lyons at lyons5804@gmail.com or 515-480-8362.