



REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL RFP-2320

For: Affordable Connectivity Outreach Program

The Rhode Island Commerce Corporation (Corporation) seeks proposals from eligible entities for Affordable Connectivity Program Outreach, which will be funded by a grant from the Federal Communications Commission (“FCC”). This program is being administered by the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation (“Corporation”) to support outreach efforts for the FCC Affordable Connectivity Program (“ACP”) for the state of Rhode Island. Requests for grant funding through a subaward from the Corporation should be focused on (1) the number of outreach events/activities planned; (2) the number of individuals reached in order to increase awareness of the ACP; (3) the number and type of in-person enrollment events to be undertaken; and (4) the number of individuals enrolled as a result of enrollment events.

This document constitutes a Request for Proposal (“RFP”), in a competitive format, from eligible entities. The respondents (“Proposers”) to this RFP shall provide a proposal, in accordance with the terms and conditions set forth herein, to provide all or part of ACP Grant Program Outreach (the “Program”) pursuant to a subaward from the Corporation as described in the Scope of Program Activities.

Project Overview

The Corporation seeks proposals from eligible entities to participate in the Program to increase enrollment in the ACP in the State. Eligible entities are: (1) municipalities, (2) consortiums/coalitions of municipalities, (3) non-profit organizations, with written support from the municipality(ies) in which they will operate, and (4) other public entities, with written support from the municipality(ies) in which they will operate. For profit entities are not eligible to respond to this RFP or receive grant funding from the Corporation.

The Corporation may make awards in amounts up to \$50,000. Average awards are expected to be \$18,000. Proposals may provide a suite of ideas for outreach events and activities or a single event or activity. Funds will primarily be disbursed on a reimbursement basis, however, a portion of funding up to 25% may be advanced to commence activities.

Background

As a quasi-public agency, the Corporation is the official full-service, economic development organization for the state of Rhode Island. The Corporation works with public, private and nonprofit partners to create the conditions for businesses in all sectors to thrive and to improve the quality of life for our citizens by promoting the State’s long-term economic health and prosperity.

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 appropriated \$14.2 billion for the ACP, which provides qualifying low-income households discounts on broadband service and connected devices, and expressly authorizes the FCC outreach for the ACP, including providing grants to outreach partners. The ACP plays an integral role in helping to bridge the digital divide, which is an ongoing priority for the federal government.

Recognizing the importance of effective outreach to eligible households from trusted messengers to historically underserved communities, Congress authorized the FCC to establish the ACP Outreach Grant Program. The Program provides eligible governmental and non-governmental entities with the funding and resources needed to increase awareness of and participation in the ACP among those eligible households most in need of affordable connectivity.

The Corporation is undertaking a sub-grant program through this RFP, with a prioritization for awards to municipalities, to increase awareness of the ACP, as part of a grant authorized by the FCC. The Corporation has funding in the amount of \$169,400 to support awareness and outreach of the ACP. The ACP program is a \$30/month subsidy to qualifying residents that offsets their in-home or cell-service internet bill. As of August 2023, only about 37% of RI households eligible for this \$30/month subsidy have been taking advantage of the program.

Scope of Program Activities

All work performed pursuant to the Scope of Program Activities described below must be completed no later than **June 30, 2024**. Proposers should describe in detail how they can best fulfill the activities described below and include the anticipated impact of the outreach efforts for the state of Rhode Island.

Funds shall be used by selected Proposers solely for outreach activities to encourage and make applications to the Federal Communications Commission's Affordable Connectivity Program. All activities must be consistent with the FCC's program [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#), which details allowable costs (pages 21-22). Applicants will be able to request funding to support:

- ACP application assistance: In-person ACP application assistance support offered to ACP-eligible households. Note: Remote technical and application assistance support is **unallowable**.
- Digital campaigns: Execution of ACP marketing strategy on various digital and social media channels where ACP-eligible households are likely to engage. This includes but is not limited to social media, mass text messaging, phone banks, etc.
- Outreach materials: Development, printing, and distribution of infographics, fact sheets, flyers, newsletters, consumer handouts, and/or literature campaigns. This includes in-language translation of outreach materials to reach diverse communities and making outreach materials accessible to individuals with disabilities.
- Direct mail: Development, printing, and distribution of direct mail to eligible households.
- ACP Provider Service Locator: Provision of information to eligible households on how to locate ACP service providers serving in the areas where the outreach is performed.
- Personnel and fringe benefits: Compensation and fringe benefits for personnel whose time was spent exclusively conducting ACP outreach activities and/or in-person ACP application assistance either in a part-time or full-time capacity. Fringe benefit calculation must be done in line with 2 C.F.R. 200 (Uniform Guidance) requirements.

- Planning: Costs associated with the planning and execution of ACP in-person and virtual outreach events, workshops, campaigns, and activities to raise ACP awareness. Costs associated with the planning and execution of in-person ACP application assistance events. Light refreshments for in-person ACP outreach events must be included as part of the budget submission and approved by the FCC.
- Travel: Travel to- and from planned ACP outreach and/or in-person ACP application assistance events, to include mileage, gas, and related travel incidentals.
- Supplies: Information technology hardware or systems such as hotspots, tablets, computers, printers, etc. that will be used exclusively for ACP outreach and ACP application assistance. This cost is capped at two percent of award funds.
- Project Management: Costs incurred in direct support of grant administration that are not included in the organization's indirect cost pool (e.g., preparing and submitting programmatic and financial reports, establishing and/or maintaining inventory, responding to official information requests such as audits, monitoring pass-through recipients). This cost is capped at five percent of award funds.
- Facilities Rental: Costs associated with facilities rental for ACP outreach and/or in-person ACP application assistance events.

Applicants are required to adhere to 2 C.F.R. 200 (Uniform Guidance) with regard to the Program and the expenditure of funding provided by the Corporation. Proposers additionally may be asked to attend occasional meetings with the Corporation. Proposers should be prepared to speak to how they will track and report against three FCC-required metrics: (1) the number of outreach events/activities planned; (2) the number of individuals reached in order to increase awareness of the ACP; (3) the number and type of in-person enrollment events; and (4) the number of individuals enrolled as a result of enrollment events.

Proposers should expect to report against these above-listed metrics at least quarterly in a format to be provided by the Corporation.

Qualifications

The Proposer must be an eligible entity. This program will prioritize municipalities as sub-recipients but may provide grants to nonprofits or other public entities, consistent with the FCC's program requirements, provided that such non-profit entities have a written support letter from at least one of the local municipalities in which they are working. As required by the FCC, no for-profit entities are eligible Proposers.

Project Timeline

Proposers should provide a timeline of their proposed activities and demonstrate how their Proposed activities and outcomes can be accomplished, including the dissemination of any funding received, on or before June 30, 2024.

Each successful Proposer(s) will enter into a subaward with the Corporation. The duration of the initial subaward between the Corporation and the successful Proposer(s) is expected to begin

upon the date of subaward approval (expected by September 30, 2023) and terminate on June 30, 2024.

Budget

Proposer should include comprehensive pricing and/or rate sheet for all potential activities that it might undertake in connection with this RFP should it be selected.

The budget should include all applicable outreach event and activity fees and out-of-pocket expenses that were required in order to properly hold and track the outreach events and conduct and track the outreach activities. Costs of supplies (hotspots, printers, tablets, computers) are capped at 2% of total budget; supplies must be used exclusively for ACP outreach. Costs for Program Management is capped at 5% of total budget. Applicants shall also follow 2 C.F.R. 200 (Uniform Guidance) with regards to spending federal dollars.

Proposers to this RFP shall provide a proposed fee structure for providing services necessary to complete the proposed Scope of Activities. Proposers shall include a total, maximum price to accomplish the scope items incorporated in the proposal. Fee structure proposals shall include, but are not limited to costs for specific task items from the Scope of Activities along with an estimate regarding the duration and number of hours to complete each task. Additionally, proposers shall provide a personnel schedule which includes job title and billing rate for any work which may be undertaken under a subaward. Mark up rates for purchases or pass-through charges are not permitted under this engagement. The Corporation reserves the right to adjust both the budget and related services in making an award to a Proposer.

In addition to showing how you will meet the requirements outlined above, Proposers should also provide information regarding the following:

- **Research & Analytics:** Provide an overview of how you will determine success of the activities undertaken. What are the analytic tools or services that you use, and what type of information will you be reporting back to the Corporation as it relates to meeting the Program objectives?
- **Travel and Administration:** The Proposer should estimate any travel costs expected to be incurred during the subaward period. Travel must be in line with the budget submitted and approved by the Corporation and follow guidance from all relevant Federal and State statutes.

Criteria for Selection

Those proposals for this RFP that are determined to be responsive will be further evaluated according to the criteria outlined below.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

	Points
OVERALL EXPERIENCE OF ENTITY & DEMONSTRATED RESULTS Our evaluation will include an assessment of the history of your entity, your experience as it relates to the requirements within this RFP, evidence of past performance, quality and relevance of past work, references, and related items.	30
CREATIVITY Our evaluation will include an assessment of the quality of proposed strategies, and creativity.	15
QUALIFICATIONS OF PERSONNEL Our evaluation will include an assessment of the qualifications and experience of your managerial team, staff, subcontractors, and related items.	15
STRATEGIC THINKING/PLANNING APPROACH Overall approach and strategy described/outlined in the proposal and the eligible entity's capacity to perform the engagement within the specified timeframe (prior experience of the eligible entity in meeting timelines will be factored in here)	15
BUDGET APPROACH/COST EFFECTIVENESS Effective and efficient delivery of quality services is demonstrated in relation to the budget allocation. The allocation is reasonable and appropriate.	25
Total	100

NOTE: Designated Corporation staff or selected advisors will evaluate the written proposals. The Corporation may at any time during the evaluation process seek clarification from Proposers regarding any information contained within their proposal. Final scores for each respondent will reflect a consensus of the evaluations. Any attempt by a Proposer to contact a member of Corporation staff or selected advisors outside the RFP process, in an attempt to gain knowledge or an advantage, may result in disqualification of Proposer.

Instructions and Notifications to Proposers

1. Potential proposers are advised to review all sections of this RFP carefully and to follow instructions completely, as failure to make a complete submission as described elsewhere herein may result in rejection of the proposal.
2. Alternative approaches and/or methodologies to accomplish the desired or intended results of this procurement are solicited. However, proposals that depart from or materially alter the terms, requirements, or scope of activities defined by this RFP will be rejected as being non-responsive.
3. All costs associated with developing or submitting a proposal in response to this RFP, or to provide oral or written clarification of its content, shall be borne by the proposer. The Corporation assumes no responsibility for such costs.
4. Proposals are considered to be irrevocable for a period of not less than 120 days following the date set for submission of proposals.
5. All pricing submitted will be considered to be firm and fixed unless otherwise indicated herein.
6. Proposals misdirected to other locations, or that are otherwise not present at the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation by the submission deadline for any cause will be determined to be late and will not be considered. For the purposes of this requirement, the official time and date shall be that of the time clock in the reception area of the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation.
7. All proposals should identify the proposed team of professionals if any, along with respective areas of expertise and relevant credentials. Proposer should also provide a delineation of the portion of the Scope of Activities for which each of these professionals will be responsible.
8. All proposals should include the proposer's FEIN or Social Security number as evidenced by a W9, downloadable from <https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw9.pdf>
9. All proposals should include a completed RFP Response Certification Cover Form, included in this document and available here: <https://commerceri.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/RFP-RESPONSE-CERTIFICATION-COVER-FORM.pdf>
10. An award made pursuant to this RFP will be contingent upon the availability of funds and made at the discretion of the Corporation.
11. Awarding this RFP is based on the Evaluation Criteria set forth in this RFP. Proposers are advised, however, that all materials and ideas submitted as part of this proposal and during the performance of any award shall be the property of and owned by the Corporation, which may use any such materials and ideas.
12. Interested parties are instructed to peruse the Corporation's website (www.commerceri.com) on a regular basis, as additional information relating to this solicitation may be released in the form of an addendum to this RFP. Addenda will also be posted to the Rhode Island State Division of Purchases' website at www.ridop.ri.gov.

13. Equal Employment Opportunity (R.I. Gen. Laws § 28-5.1-1, et seq.) – § 28- 5.1-1 Declaration of policy – (a) Equal opportunity and affirmative action toward its achievement is the policy of all units of Rhode Island state government, including all public and quasi-public agencies, commissions, boards and authorities, and in the classified, unclassified, and non-classified services of state employment. This policy applies to all areas where State dollars are spent, in employment, public services, grants and financial assistance, and in state licensing and regulation.

14. In accordance with Title 7, Chapter 1.2 of the General Laws of Rhode Island, no corporation or limited liability company organized under the laws of another state or country shall have the right to transact business in Rhode Island until it shall have procured a Certificate of Authority to do so from the Rhode Island Secretary of State (401-222-3040). This is a requirement only of a successful Proposer.

15. Reserved.

16. The Corporation reserves the right to award to one or more Proposers.

Proposal Requirements

In order to be considered responsive, proposals must at a minimum contain the following:

Technical Proposal Elements

1. Description of the proposed approach and work plan. Activities and timelines should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-oriented. Include a timeline of major tasks and milestones.
2. Person who will be the primary point of contact with the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation.
3. Qualifications of the Proposer to provide the Scope of Activities including capability, capacity, similarly complex projects and related experience and client references. Certification of availability of individuals in proposal.
4. A listing of the staff to be assigned to this engagement and their respective qualifications, past experience on engagements of this scope including resumes, and their role in those past engagements.
5. A description of the outcome monitoring and evaluation plan including a list of tools to track process, output and outcome measures for each component of the application.

Proposal Submission

Responses to this RFP must be received as follows:

One (1) electronic (PDF) version must be provided by email to RFP@commerceri.com by **October 2 2023, 11:59pm to be considered for Round 1** and by **October 30, 2023, 11:59pm to be considered for Round 2**. Submissions that are late, misdirected or sent to the wrong email address will not be accepted. Round 2 awards are contingent on fund availability.

Note: To ensure transparency, no phone calls pertaining to this RFP will be accepted.

Questions, interpretations, or clarifications concerning this RFP should be directed by e-mail to RFP@commerceri.com no later than 11:59 pm on September 22, 2023. Responses to questions, interpretations, or clarifications concerning this RFP will be posted online via addendum at www.commerceri.com and www.ridop.ri.gov on September 25, 2023 to ensure equal awareness of important facts and details.

The Rhode Island Commerce Corporation reserves the right to terminate this solicitation prior to entering into any agreement with any eligible entities pursuant to this Request for Proposal, and by responding hereto, no eligible entities are vested with any rights in any way whatsoever.

Rhode Island Commerce Corporation reserves the right to reject any or all proposals for not complying with the terms of this RFP.

RFP/RFQ RESPONSE CERTIFICATION COVER FORM

Instruction: To fulfill your RFP/RFQ response, this form must be completed, printed, signed and included with your submission.

SECTION 1 - RESPONDENT INFORMATION

RFP/RFQ Number:

RFP/RFQ Title:

RFP/RFQ Respondent Name:

Address:

Telephone:

Fax:

Contact Name:

Contact Title:

Contact Email:

SECTION 2 —DISCLOSURES

RFP/RFQ Respondents must respond to every statement. RFP/RFQ Responses submitted without a complete response may be deemed nonresponsive.

Indicate "Y" (Yes) or "N" (No) for Disclosures 1-4, and if "Yes," provide details below

____ 1. State whether the Respondent, or any officer, director, manager, stockholder, member, partner, or other owner or principal of the Respondent or any parent, subsidiary, or affiliate has been subject to suspension or debarment by any federal, state, or municipal governmental authority, or the subject of criminal prosecution, or convicted of a criminal offense within the previous 5 years. If "Yes," provide details below.

____ 2. State whether the Respondent, or any officer, director, manager, stockholder, member, partner, or other owner or principal of the Respondent or any parent, subsidiary, or affiliate has had any contracts with a federal, state, or municipal governmental authority terminated for any reason within the previous 5 years. If "Yes," provide details below.

____ 3. State whether the Respondent, or any officer, director, manager, stockholder, member, partner, or other owner or principal of the Respondent or any parent, subsidiary, or affiliate has been fined more than \$5000 for violation(s) of any Rhode Island environmental law(s) by the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management within the previous 5 years. If "Yes," provide details below.

____ 4. State whether any officer, director, manager, stockholder, member, partner, or other owner or principal of the Respondent is serving or has served within the past two calendar years as either an appointed or elected official of any state governmental authority or quasi-public corporation, including without limitation, any entity created as a legislative body or public or state agency by the general assembly or constitution of this state.

Disclosure details (continue on additional sheets if necessary):

SECTION 3 —OWNERSHIP DISCLOSURE

Respondents must provide all relevant information. Respondent proposals submitted without a complete response may be deemed nonresponsive.

If the Respondent is publicly held, the Respondent may provide owner information about only those stockholders, members, partners, or other owners that hold at least 10% of the record or beneficial equity interests of the Respondent; otherwise, complete ownership disclosure is required.

List each officer, director, manager, stockholder, member, partner, or other owner or principle of the Respondent, and each intermediate parent company and the ultimate parent company of the Respondent. For each individual, provide his or her name, business address, principal occupation, position with the Respondent, and the percentage of ownership, if any, he or she holds in the Respondent, and each intermediate parent company and the ultimate parent company of the Respondent.

SECTION 4 —CERTIFICATIONS

Respondents must respond to every statement. Responses submitted without a complete response may be deemed nonresponsive.

Indicate "Y" (Yes) or "N" (No), and if "No," provide details below.

THE RESPONDENT CERTIFIES THAT:

___ 1. The Respondent will immediately disclose, in writing, to the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation any potential conflict of interest which may occur during the term of any contract awarded pursuant to this solicitation.

___ 2. The Respondent possesses all licenses and anyone who will perform any work will possess all licenses required by applicable federal, state, and local law necessary to perform the requirements of any contract awarded pursuant to this solicitation and will maintain all required licenses during the term of any contract awarded pursuant to this solicitation. In the event that any required license shall lapse or be restricted or suspended, the Respondent shall immediately notify the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation in writing.

___ 3. The Respondent will maintain all required insurance during the term of any contract pursuant to this solicitation. In the event that any required insurance shall lapse or be canceled, the Respondent will immediately notify the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation in writing.

___ 4. The Respondent understands that falsification of any information in its RFP/RFQ response or failure to notify the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation of any changes in any disclosures or certifications in this Respondent Certification may be grounds for suspension, debarment, and/or prosecution for fraud.

___ 5. The Respondent has not paid and will not pay any bonus, commission, fee, gratuity, or other remuneration to any employee or official of the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation or the State of Rhode Island or any subdivision of the State of Rhode Island or other governmental authority for the purpose of obtaining an award of a contract pursuant to this solicitation. The Respondent further certifies that no bonus, commission, fee, gratuity, or other remuneration has been or will be received from any third party or paid to any third party contingent on the award of a contract pursuant to this solicitation.

___ 6. This RFP/RFQ response is not a collusive RFP/RFQ response. Neither the Respondent, nor any of its owners, stockholders, members, partners, principals, directors, managers, officers, employees, or agents has in any way colluded, conspired, or agreed, directly or indirectly, with any other Respondent or person to submit a collusive response to the solicitation or to refrain from submitting response to the solicitation, or has in any manner, directly or indirectly, sought by agreement or collusion or other communication with any other Respondent or person to fix the price or prices in the response or the response of any other Respondent, or to fix any overhead, profit, or cost component of the price in the response or the response of any other Respondent, or to secure through any collusion, conspiracy, or unlawful agreement any advantage against the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation or the State of Rhode Island or any person with an interest in the contract awarded pursuant to this solicitation. The price in the response is fair and proper and is not tainted by any collusion, conspiracy, or unlawful agreement on the part of the Respondent, its owners, stockholders, members, partners, principals, directors, managers, officers, employees, or agents.

___ 7. The Respondent: (i) is not identified on the General Treasurer's list created pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws § 37-2.5-3 as a person or entity engaging in investment activities in Iran described in § 37-2.5-2(b); and (ii) is not engaging in any such investment activities in Iran.

___ 8. The Respondent will comply with all of the laws that are incorporated into and/or applicable to any contract with the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation.

Certification details (continue on additional sheet if necessary):

Submission by the Respondent of a response pursuant to this solicitation constitutes an offer to contract with the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation on the terms and conditions contained in this solicitation and the response. The Respondent certifies that: (1) the Respondent has reviewed this solicitation and agrees to comply with its terms and conditions; (2) the response is based on this solicitation; and (3) the information submitted in the response (including this Respondent Certification Cover Form) is accurate and complete. The Respondent acknowledges that the terms and conditions of this solicitation and the response will be incorporated into any contract awarded to the Respondent pursuant to this solicitation and the response. The person signing below represents, under penalty of perjury, that he or she is fully informed regarding the preparation and contents of this response and has been duly authorized to execute and submit this response on behalf of the Respondent.

RESPONDENT

Date: _____

Name of Respondent

Signature in ink

Printed name and title of person signing on behalf of Respondent