

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

FRANKLIN COUNTY FISCAL COURT BROADBAND FEASIBILITY STUDY



The Franklin County Fiscal Court is soliciting proposals from highly qualified firms with experience in private telecommunications networks, with the qualifications and background to conduct a fundamental broadband needs assessment and feasibility study for the unincorporated area of Franklin County, Kentucky. The study will provide the County with the best solutions needed to improve broadband connectivity across Franklin County to provide access to quality education, community quality of life, and advancing economic development. The County recognizes reaching this goal may require a mix of technologies and phased build-out plans. Flexibility, ingenuity, and innovation, along with a cohesive design will be necessary to reach the goal.

FRANKLIN COUNTY INFORMATION

Franklin County is located in the heart of the Bluegrass region of central Kentucky along Interstate 64. Two primary interstate interchanges along I-64 serve the community; US 127 to the west and US 60 to the east. In addition to being the home of the State Capital, Franklin County is located within the “Golden Triangle” of Louisville, Lexington and Cincinnati. The County geographic area is roughly 211 square miles with an estimated population of 50,000. The County occupies parts of both the Inner and Outer Bluegrass Regions. It is primarily an upland limestone area, dissected by normal stream drainage. The topography is rolling to hilly.

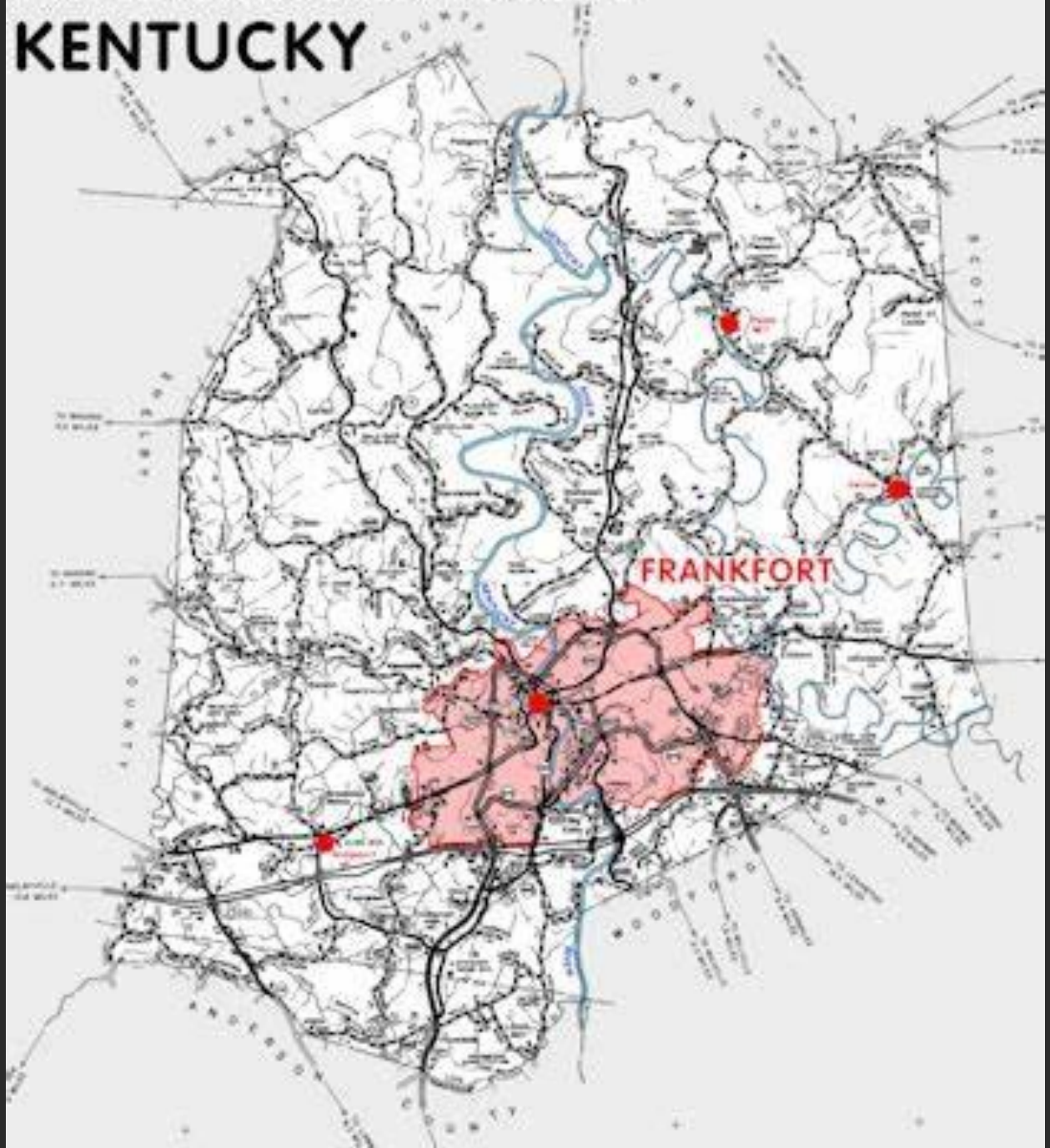
The most conspicuous topographic features are the entrenched meandering valleys of the Kentucky River and Benson and Elkhorn Creeks. The Kentucky River bisects the county and lies 350 to 400 feet below the adjacent uplands.

Elevations of the higher ridges are commonly between 850 and 900 feet. The highest point, 930 feet, is on Union Ridge near the eastern edge of the county. Pea Ridge, approximately 1 mile west of Capital City Airport, has a maximum elevation of 920 feet, and Dry Ridge, near the western edge of the county, has a maximum elevation in Franklin County of 913 feet.

A number of abandoned meanders occur along Elkhorn Creek and the Kentucky River, marking former routes of these streams. Hill-like masses of variable heights occupy the centers of these former stream-valley loops. Examples are The Backbone, an abandoned-meander core on Elkhorn Creek with a maximum elevation of 867 feet, and Fort Hill, an abandoned-meander core on the Kentucky River in Frankfort with a maximum elevation of 790 feet.

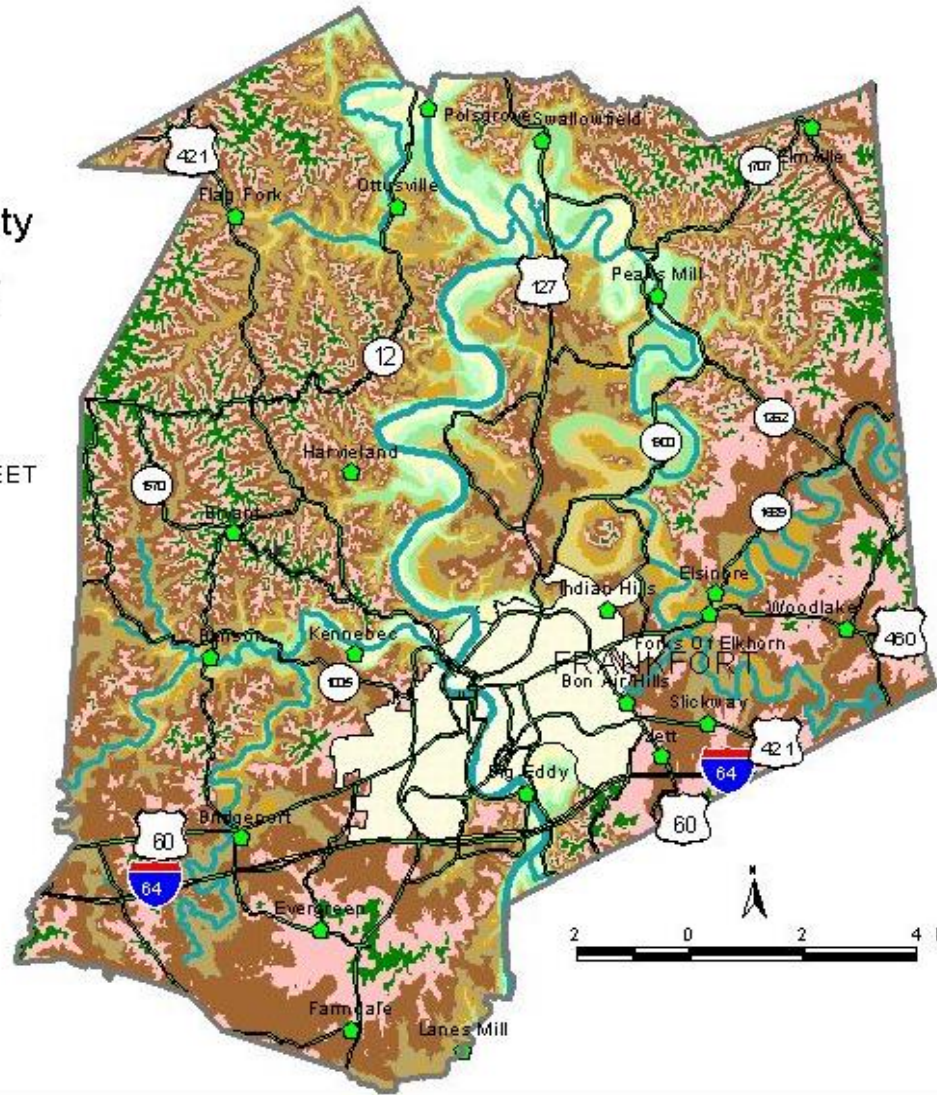
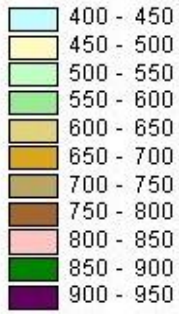
The lowest elevation in the county is 455 feet, the normal pool level of the Kentucky River below Lock and Dam No. 4 at Frankfort. The normal pool level of the Kentucky River upstream from this dam is 469 feet. The elevation of Frankfort at city hall is approximately 510 feet; the State Capitol is at 595 feet; and the hills around Frankfort are 800 to 820 feet. Other elevations include Bridgeport, 695 feet; Farmdale, 820 feet; Peaks Mill, 525 feet; Swallowfield, 530 feet; and Switzer, 734 feet.

FRANKLIN COUNTY KENTUCKY



Franklin County Topography

ELEVATION IN FEET



SCOPE

The project should be designed to align with the expectations of the United States Treasury guidance for the American Rescue/Recovery Plan:

- **Unserved and underserved households:** Funds may be used to make necessary investments in broadband infrastructure aimed at “unserved or underserved” communities. Treasury defines unserved and underserved at speeds below 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload
- **Eligible projects are expected to meet or exceed symmetrical upload and download speeds of 100 Mbps.** However, in instances where required speeds cannot be achieved (due of the geography, topography, or excessive costs), the affected project would be expected to meet or exceed 100 Mbps download with a minimum of 20 Mbps upload with scalability to a symmetrical minimum of 100

The selected firm must be able to provide the following services including, but not limited to:

1. Understand and assess current infrastructure within Franklin County – provide inventory of existing facilities and broadband assets (i.e. towers, wireless facilities, fiber, conduit) within or adjacent to Franklin County and evaluate existing broadband and wireless coverage.
2. Evaluate Franklin County’s current private network capabilities – Perform technical and financial evaluation of Franklin County’s existing broadband network.
3. Conduct local broadband market assessment – Identify existing broadband options and costs across the community. Profile Franklin County and provide assessment of telecommunications environment detailing types of services, pricing, availability and limitations. Identify and analyze existing resources of all stakeholder entities.
4. Conduct stakeholder outreach – Identify all key stakeholders (i.e., utilities, citizens, businesses, schools, Frankfort Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Authority, local tourism authority and others to ensure that they are included in the process from the beginning.
5. Conduct customer market research—Conduct residential and/or business customer demand survey, obtaining information such as:
 - a. Customer satisfaction with current telecommunications/broadband providers
 - b. Current and future needs of customers and community’s desire for enhanced broadband services (i.e., video, voice)
 - c. Willingness to pay for that service and at what price for those services
 - d. Overall interest in obtaining services from new provider in market
6. Assess potential for regional coordination and cooperation – Assess potential for regional coordination (among entities and/or other nearby cooperatives).

7. Engage with potential providers – Identify and engage potential provider-partners with intent to:
 - a. Identify entities that can be service provider to end-users
 - b. Engage providers early to understand network infrastructure and operations
 - c. Determine if providers can bring financial resources and investment to project

8. Provide assessment of benefits/risks, gap analysis and project map – Assess community benefits and risks through improved and more efficient broadband services (enhancing citizen opportunities for learning, health care, leisure, emergency services, law enforcement and community connections). Evaluate current environment against current and future needs of Franklin County, including all stakeholders defined in project. Identify key issues limiting broadband expansion. Create comprehensive map that provides analysis of local broadband environment.

9. Recommendation for broadband strategies – Based on consultant’s analysis and feedback from the community, conduct analysis of business models (including funding options) for private entities, cooperatives, and Franklin County to indirectly or directly improve and/or provide broadband services to the community. Business model strategies must be based on sound and reasonable business cases that can be demonstrated quantitatively through development of comprehensive financial model. Present various business models to Franklin County and potential benefits and risks of each. Business models must also identify at a minimum, but not limited to, the following:

- a. Ownership of network
- b. Management and operation of network
- c. Capital investment required (i.e., amount, timeframe, responsible party)
- d. Assets required (alignment with inventory of assets and inventory)
- e. Potential services and partners
- f. Potential private entities or cooperatives that may be interested in providing services in the area. Business model strategies to be considered should include, at a minimum:
 1. Municipal wholesale – residential and business
 2. Municipal wholesale – business only
 3. Open access provider
 4. Municipal broadband partnership
 5. Infrastructure
 6. Public services

This should include the consultant’s recommended approach to implementation of preferred business model strategies.

10. Develop network conceptual design – Ensure that business model is viable and develop network footprint and conceptual design.

11. Conduct cost analysis – Conduct thorough cost analysis to provide critical information regarding network capital expenditure estimates, financing alternatives, market penetration, rates and service offering information. This will be utilized to ultimately develop a business plan with a 5-10 year financial forecast.

12. Evaluate financing and funding availability – Evaluate financing needs including:
 - a. Stakeholder or potential third-party contributors

- b. Grant funding options
- c. Establishing a public-private partnership, if viable
- d. Capital, revenue bond and municipal self-funding options.

Should Franklin County determine that the project should move forward from the needs assessment and feasibility study phase, Franklin County Fiscal Court, at its sole and absolute discretion, reserves the right to amend the existing agreement and or enter into a new agreement with the successful firm or elect to use the material provided and issue a new RFP.

Other services as may assigned by the Fiscal Court

SCHEDULE

The schedule is as follows:

- RFP issue –June 6, 2021
- RFP questions due (via email to Ann Northcutt) – June 14, 2021
- RFP due –June 17, 2021
- RFP review completion – June 24, 2021
- Interviews of selected consultants –June 30 and July 1, 2021
- Project award –July 23, 2021
- First draft report due – August 23, 2021
- Final deliverables & Study due –October 15, 2021

SUBMITTAL

The proposals are not to exceed 30 pages and shall be submitted both electronically to the Franklin County Fiscal Court at [HTTPS://TINYURL.COM/FCFCRRFP](https://tinyurl.com/fcfcrrfp) as well as five (5) hard copies no later than 2:00 p.m. local time on June 17, 2021 to 321 W. Main Street, Frankfort, KY 40601. At 2:05 p.m. local time on June 17, 2021, the proposals will be publicly opened and the name of each firm read aloud. This public opening of the proposals will be live streamed on the Franklin County KY Facebook page at [Facebook.com/fcfcyky](https://www.facebook.com/fcfcyky). All submittals shall be clearly marked “**Franklin County Broadband Feasibility Study**”. Proposals received after the specified date and time will not be considered.

Proposal Format

Proposals are not to exceed 30 pages and shall include the following:

1. Letter of Transmittal
2. Description of Project Team
3. Description of firm’s capabilities and experience in the preparation of Broadband Feasibility Plans
4. Description of experience in and proposed strategy
5. Proposed general project approach and timeline
6. Office location of firm’s key personnel
7. Description of firm’s ability to be responsive

PROPOSAL EVALUATION

- Description of the firm's capabilities and experience in the field of community broadband planning services including analysis and identification of issues including constraints as well as opportunities (20 points)
- Ability of professional personnel (15)
- Past record and experience in the preparation of Broadband Feasibility Studies (20 points)
- Performance data on file (10)
- Willingness to meet time and budget requirements (20)
- Firm's location (5 points)
- Workload (10)

Firms responding to the request will be ranked according to the written information submitted and interviews may be conducted. The Franklin County Fiscal Court will enter negotiations with the highest ranked qualifying firm to execute an agreement. If the parties are unable to negotiate a satisfactory agreement, the second ranked firm will be promptly notified.

Questions regarding this Request for Proposals shall be submitted via email to Ann Northcutt, Franklin County Community Development and Grants Administrator at ann.northcutt@franklincounty.ky.gov