



REQUEST FOR INFORMATION FOR  
BROADBAND DEPLOYMENT  
PARTNERSHIPS

ISSUED:  
JUNE 13, 2022

# 1. Background and Purpose of RFI

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Socorro Electric Cooperative (SEC or Cooperative) spans roughly 11,000sq miles, 45,000 poles, and 8600 meters spanning, some or all of Catron, Cibola, Sierra, Socorro, Torrance, and Valencia counties. The Cooperative has recently undertaken a broadband feasibility study to better understand and ultimately implement solutions to positively impact the development across the service territory.

SEC therefore issues this Request for Information (RFI) to determine partnerships to collaborate with the Cooperative to address the lack of broadband infrastructure and service across the service area. SEC seeks ideas and interest from a variety of entities regarding solutions to bring broadband to currently unserved and underserved homes and businesses.

The preferred technology is fiber-to-the-premise (FTTP). However, Socorro Electric Cooperative is open to creative ideas to serve the highly rural, and low population density region. These could include a hybrid fiber/wireless and/or wireless last mile solution.

In the responses to this RFI the Cooperative seeks to learn how potential partners will further the goal of affordable high-speed connectivity and how the respondents envision the role SEC should have in the development, operations, and management of any infrastructure. Socorro Electric seeks to understand innovative business models and Socorro Electric Cooperative's role for the development of broadband access for the residents and businesses across the Cooperative's service territory.

The Cooperative welcome the responses of all prospective partners, including incumbent service providers, as well as competitive providers, public cooperatives, and entities that are not traditional internet service providers (ISPs) but are interested in acting as a partner in offering service under innovative business models. Nontraditional providers may respond as part of a partnership with an ISP or may provide separate responses outlining their approaches.

SEC will review responses based on the respondents' experience, how well the responses address access to high-speed broadband, affordability, digital equity needs, and how the proposed business model(s) balances and shares risks and rewards, and other factors. Socorro Electric may ask respondents to refine or clarify responses as needed.

Following the evaluation of responses, SEC may issue a request for more detail relating to specific locations, other details, or cancel or delay plans to deploy a network, or choose another direction that is deemed in the Cooperative's best interest.

Responding to the RFI is not a guarantee of a contract award. Further, there is no guarantee an RFP will be developed as a result of this RFI. Socorro Electric reserves the right to withdraw the RFI or any subsequent RFP, or to decline to award any contract.

## 2. State of Broadband in the Socorro Electric Cooperative Region

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The State of New Mexico's Broadband Map shows a significant amount of underserved and unserved addresses across the SEC service area, see Figure 1 below. The State has prioritized these areas due to the lack of 100/20Mbps speeds. These locations are the majority of the SEC service addresses.

The City of Socorro Electric is expected to be served by TDS, a cable provider. As such Socorro Electric is less concerned about service for the City of Socorro, however, SEC will entertain proposals that also include the City due to the population density and potential revenue that is needed to support a larger network build. The City should not be the main focus of the response. In addition, part of the region are served by a number of ISPs including CenturyLink DSL, HugesNet and ViaStat satellite, ENMR/Plateau, and Western New Mexico Communications. SEC is not explicitly encouraging overbuilding and would welcome proposals from existing and new providers to provide 100/20 Mbps as a minimum across the region.

Ultimately, Socorro Electric Cooperative's main focus with this RFI is to ensure affordable high-speed broadband services are available across the Cooperative's service area and to identify and understand the various roles needed or desired of the Cooperative.

## 3. Project Goals and Vision

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Socorro Electric Cooperative expects to use the responses to this RFI as the basis for further engagement and looks to the responses to help inform grant requests and partnership development, however Socorro Electric also reserves the rights listed in Section 7.

As part of the development of high-speed connectivity Socorro Electric Cooperative expects the following to be taken into consideration for a response to the RFI:

- Innovative ways by which the SEC can support investment and opportunity in broadband
- Provide the broadband infrastructure to currently unserved and underserved homes and businesses to enable residents, workers, and visitors the opportunity to access affordable, reliable high-speed broadband connections to the internet and other networks; the infrastructure will ideally be capable of 1 Gbps, but the ability to provide a minimum of 100Mbps downstream and 20Mbps upstream per the Infrastructure Act requirements.
- Provide unrestricted data aka no data caps (i.e. the allowable bandwidth of data use per month)

- Improve service within three (3) years and comply with any state or federal grant timelines.
- Utilize and inform customers about any and all of the subsidy programs for affordable broadband.
- A wired only solution within an X mile radius of the National Radio Astronomy Observatory also known as the Very Large Array.
- Redundancy outside the I-25 corridor, including interconnection to Continental Divide Electric Cooperative

## 4. Socorro Electric Cooperative Assets and Contribution

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As the Cooperative is developing plans and roles in the creation and delivery of broadband access across the region, the Cooperative is willing to consider a variety of roles and support mechanisms for the deployment of high-speed connectivity. These could include but are not limited to the following. SEC encourages the respondents to identify roles and responsibilities of SEC to help support the development of broadband access.

- Assistance in navigating permitting, planning, construction efforts
- Support partnership(s) through plan review, coordination, and inspections to potentially help reduce the cost of construction
- Provide access to information about poles, span distance, and existing broadband infrastructure (where appropriate and through an NDA).
- Provide multiple forms of support in pursuit of state and federal broadband grants.

## 5. RFI Response

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Socorro Electric Cooperative requests the following from respondents. If any of this information is unavailable, please state so and why.

### A. Cover Letter

Page Limit – 1 Page

Please include organization name, address and headquarters (if different), contact name and information.

### B. Questions

Page Limit – 10 Pages

1. Please provide information about existing network
  - a. Technologies

- b. Service area within and adjacent to the Cooperative’s service area
  - c. Number of subscribers
  - d. Service tiers
  - e. Consumer costs for service tiers
2. Please describe current plans and funding for expansion of services in the Socorro Electric Cooperative service area.
    - a. How many passings the network expansion is expected to have, and length of time until the expansion will be complete.
  3. Please identify priority areas for network development and/or expansion, please include expected number of passings.
  4. Please describe technical solution(s) to provide 100/20Mbps service. This description can include phased approaches, full build out, or other solutions but should include:
    - a. Proposed technologies and the life span of the equipment
    - b. If a wireless solution is proposed, please provide technical specifications about the wireless system including spectrum and frequency and any other relevant information about transmission.
    - c. How the proposed technologies will be deployed
    - d. A map of the service area within the Socorro Electric service area
    - e. Number of households, businesses, and other facilities passed
    - f. Estimated cost of solution(s)
    - g. Any other relevant information
  5. Please describe any barriers that have previously or continue to limit network expansion.
    - a. If appropriate, please discuss any workarounds to existing barriers.
  6. Please describe the type of partnership that will best achieve the goal of Socorro Electric to connect the Cooperative’s membership to affordable high-speed connectivity.
    - a. Discussion on funding options for the type of partnership(s) proposed
      - i. Grants, match, and lead applicant(s)
      - ii. Partner funding
      - iii. Funding/financial expectations of Socorro Electric

C. Experience

Page Limit – 2 Pages

Please provide a statement of experience discussing past performance, capabilities, and qualifications. Please describe your experience in residential and business/enterprise services. Please share such information as other networks you operate and other

partnerships with governments or nonprofit entities. Describe the nature of the projects and your firm's role.

## 6. Response Process

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### Questions

- Questions related to this RFI must be submitted via email to [jherrera@socorroelectric.com](mailto:jherrera@socorroelectric.com) no later than 5pm MDT Friday, June 24, 2022.
- Answers to the questions will be posted on Friday, July 1, 2022, by 12pm MDT

### Response Deadline

- All responses must be received via email no later than Wednesday July 13, 2022, by 4pm MDT. Submissions should be sent to [jherrera@socorroelectric.com](mailto:jherrera@socorroelectric.com)

### Summary of RFI Process

- June 12, 2022 – RFI Issued
- June 24, 2022 – Deadline for submitting questions by 5pm MDT
- July 1, 2022 – Responses to questions issued
- July 13, 2022 – Responses to RFI due by 4pm MDT

## 7. Rights Reserved

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1. SEC reserves the right to accept or reject all or portions of any response(s) to the RFI, to waive any formalities of the RFI process, to re-advertise the RFI, to amend the terms of the RFI, to extend the dates provided herein, to suspend the procurement if the desired outcomes are not achieved, to award the contract to the most responsive and responsible respondent(s) as deemed in the best interest of the Cooperative, and/or to proceed to provide the services otherwise, as SEC may determine in its sole discretion is in the best interest of the Cooperative.
2. No reimbursement will be made by Socorro Electric Cooperative for any costs incurred in responding to this RFI, developing or submitting responses to the RFI.
3. SEC reserves the absolute right to conduct such investigations as it deems necessary to assist in the evaluation of any response to the RFI and to establish the experience, responsibility, reliability, references, reputation, business ethics, history, qualifications and financial ability of the respondent(s), proposed subconsultants, Independent Consultants and suppliers. The purpose of such investigation is to satisfy the Cooperative that the respondent has the experience, resources and commercial reputation necessary to perform the work and support any warranties in the prescribed manner and time.

4. In the event the RFI responses are considered for an award, Socorro Electric Cooperative reserves the right to award Project(s) to the organization(s) that demonstrate the best ability to fulfill the requirements for the performing the subject services. The successful organization(s) will be chosen based on the qualifications, evaluation of submittals and a possible interview. The SEC reserves the right to conduct such discussions or negotiations with Proposers or other entities as it deems necessary to assist in the evaluation of any proposal, to secure maximum clarification and completeness of any proposal, and select the proposal(s) that best meets the requirements of the Cooperative and the public interest.

## 8. Map of Underserved and Unserved Locations

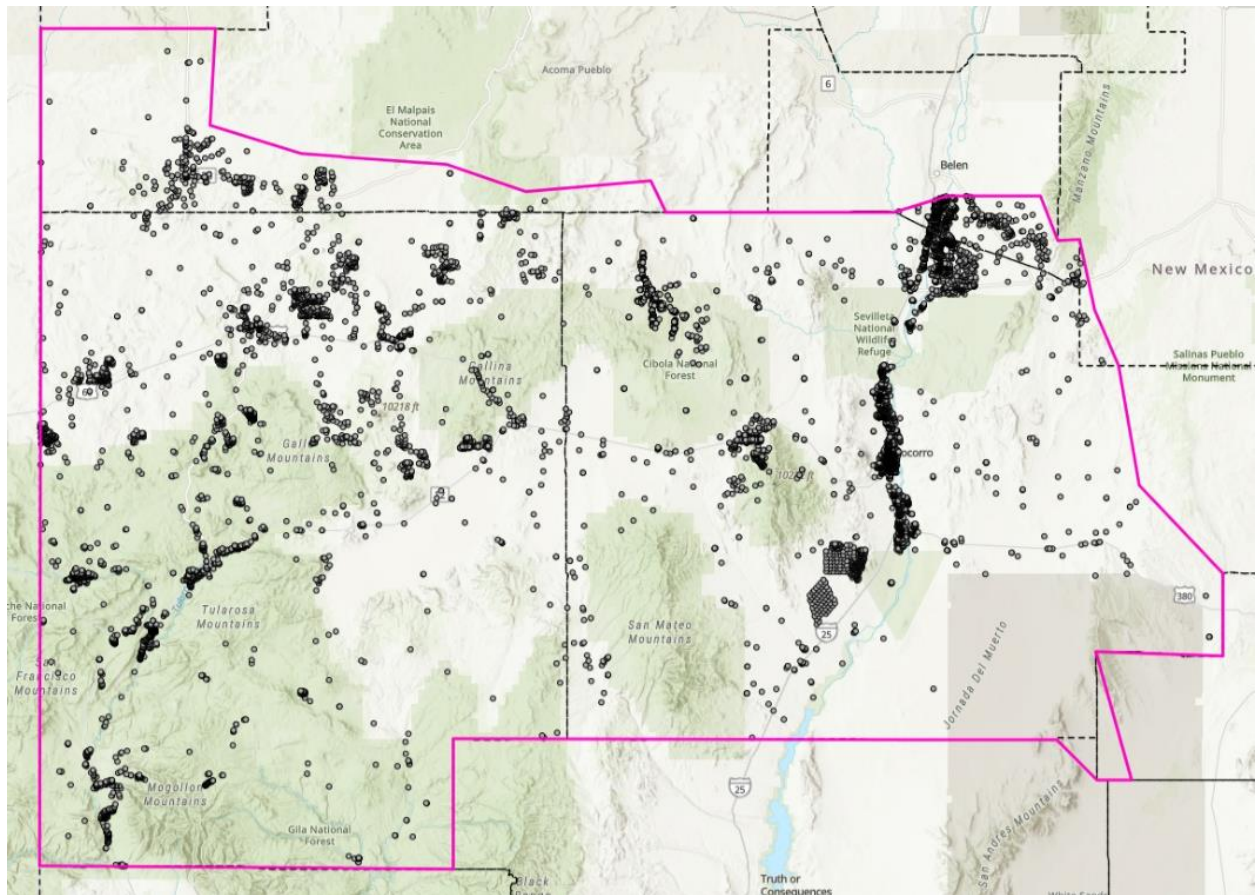


Figure 1: Underserved and Unserved locations per State of New Mexico<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [New Mexico Broadband Map \(nmbbmapping.org\)](http://nmbbmapping.org)