

- In section 2 on page 2, the RFP specifies the contract winner will “The Department expects the 2020 plan to update these strategies and integrate the new requirements specified in Act No. 79.”
  - Could you kindly clarify your expectations for final output in terms of level of detail and topic coverage relative to the existing report?

**The Department saw the existing plan through multiple drafts, comment periods, and hearings. As such, the Department feels the level of detail in that plan was adequate to meet statutory requirements at the time. Because the statute is now changed, the level of detail needed should be adequate to meet the new statute.**

- In section 3 on page 2, the RFP specifies the “The Plan should describe the public and private costs...”
  - Does this include indirect costs, such as economic implications to local economy and governments?

**This section should include both the direct costs and direct consequences to build infrastructure necessary to meet the goals of 30 V.S.A. § 202c. This could include the costs of overbuilding existing DSL and landline providers, which could diminish take rates for both providers below a sustainable point or endanger universal telephone service in the state. This could also include a scenario where the consultant recommends a novel funding mechanism. The consequences for public debt, capital outlay, overbuilding, etc. should be communicated. Speculation on the secondary effects to local economies should be included if a concern is raised by case study evidence.**

- In section 3.2 on page 3 the RFP specifies the enactment of survey(s) and provides footnote indicating that the State will seek a separate vendor to complete the survey(s).
  - Can you please clarify the consultant’s obligations as they relate to the survey?

**The consultant is expected to prepare most of the plan without having received final survey results. We do not expect the consultant to issue, conduct, or validate results from the surveys. The Department plans to issue a separate RFP for the survey portion of the Plan.**

- In section 3.6 on page 3, the RFP cites the need for “A geographically specific assessment of the status, coverage, and capacity of telecommunications networks and services available.”
  - o Could you please indicate the level of granularity required for the geospatial analysis (e.g. address level vs. census block vs. city...)?

**The State of Vermont collects and maintains address-level broadband access data voluntarily submitted by providers. This is not a complete representation of available service, but paints a much clearer picture than “service territory,” “town boundary,” or “census block” scale data. The state will share this information with the consultant.**

- o Can the State please provide additional clarity on what is covered under the assessment? For example, does the requirement include a geospatial assessment of cellular wireless broadband capacity across the state (or just coverage)?

The State has also performed “drive tests” to determine service availability along most of Vermont’s highways in response to the FCC’s highly-inaccurate “cellular coverage” maps provided by wireless carriers. Staff can share this data with the consultant as well. This level of granularity will be difficult to compare to other states, since very few states have collected such data, but it is expected that the consultant makes their best effort to compare price, offered speeds, and deployment status to what is available in other states.

- In section 3.8 on page 3, the RFP lists the goal of supporting the State’s access media organizations.
  - We would greatly appreciate additional detail on the desired goal.

Vermont’s Legislature is currently attempting to address funding available for Public, Educational, and Governmental (PEG) access management organizations in a couple of ways. In Act 79, there was established a “PEG Access Study Committee,” who considered changes to the State’s cable franchising authority and sought to develop draft legislation for alternative regulatory and funding mechanisms for PEG channels in Vermont

(<https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2020/Docs/ACTS/ACT079/ACT079%20As%20Enacted.pdf>).

The resulting draft legislation can be found in S.318

(<https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2020/Docs/BILLS/S-0318/S-0318%20As%20Introduced.pdf>). This draft legislation has not yet been voted out of committee, so its final contents and fate are yet to be seen. As of this moment, it appears the legislation may prompt a separate study for funding mechanisms, potential cost savings, and approaches used in other jurisdictions.

The Consultant is expected to stay abreast of relevant legislation during the current legislative session but may elect to provide a higher-level (but still well-informed) assessment and recommendation on this subject. The Department will make every effort to convey important information to the consultant on legislative matters.

- Section 3.11 on page 3 appears to be identical to 3.9 on the same page.
  - Could you please clarify how the two goals differ?

This is a typo.

- We would greatly appreciate additional detail behind Section 3.12 (b) (4) and 3.12 (b) (5) on page 4, in particular how they differ.

The Department is unable to comment on the legislative intent behind these items. If the Consultant feels that one solution could address both goals, they are encouraged to state as much in the work product.

- In section 3.12.1 on page 4, the RFP calls for a public comment draft and a final draft
  - Please provide the anticipated schedule for issuance of the public draft, length of the public comment period, and anticipated timing for the final draft

**The Department hopes to have a State Agency comments draft in July and a Public Comment Draft in August. The Department will receive comments in August and September, revise the document in September and October, hold public hearings in October, revise based on feedback in hearings in November, and present the plan for adoption in December.**

- In section 4.1 on page 5, the RFP specifies the pricing requirements for this RFP
  - The RFP states that more than one consultant may be selected, can you clarify if the State intends to evaluate pricing (i) based on the total lump sum price or (ii) by specific line item costs specified in the Price Schedule and potentially splitting up the scope based off of line item pricing? Can you provide more detail on how pricing will be weighted for the proposal evaluation?

**The Department anticipates hiring one consultant to complete all aspects of the plan except the survey. The Department will hire multiple experts only if it is necessary to produce a complete plan.**

- Please inform if the has State determined a relative level of effort – overall and by task - that is expected from the consultant. This would be helpful in prioritizing resources across tasks.

**It is anticipated that the Consultant provide a plan that meets the standards set forth in 30 V.S.A. § 202d and identifies resources required and potential sources of funding for implementation steps that meet every goal set forth in 30 V.S.A. § 202c. This Plan is required by the Vermont State Legislature, and the Department does not have the latitude to suggest that certain parts of the plan should receive a higher or lower priority. The consultant may, through conversations with Department staff and coordinating agencies, determine where more or less attention is needed.**