

**Champaign County, Illinois
Request for Information (RFI) # 2022-006
Broadband Infrastructure Expansion
RFI Descriptions from Respondents**



AT&T Illinois

AT&T has more than 145 years of experience in the telecommunications industry. Operating globally under the AT&T brand, we are recognized as a leading provider of IP-based communications services to residents, businesses, and governments, and as a leading U.S. provider of wireless, high speed internet access, and local and long-distance voice services. AT&T has invested more than \$3.1 billion in our wired and wireless networks in Illinois from 2019-2021.

The AT&T FiberSM network is engineered to last long into the future. Network design has been based on technology capable of gigabit service. AT&T is also “future proofing” the fiber network by transitioning to architecture allowing for multi-gig capabilities sustaining customer demand for speed increases. AT&T works closely with utility partners and local governments to deploy networks faster and more efficiently into the communities.

Previous Funding - We accepted the FCC’s offer of CAF II model-based support in 2015 for AT&T Illinois. Over the 7-year program, AT&T IL received \$62,527,549 to deploy Internet service to approximately 19,077 locations in FCC-identified eligible census blocks. This program ended at the end 2021 and AT&T met its deployment requirements (reporting over 22,650 locations).

Seeking Future Funding - Yes. Broadband funding sources through ARP and IIJA/BEAD combined with private capital are components to a sustainable model for high quality broadband.

Bluebird Network

Bluebird is as a middle mile provider enabling last mile, WISP, wireless and tower providers, and is a last mile provider to fiber to the farm, community anchor institutions and enterprise customers. As such, we have reviewed areas within Champaign County, Illinois where we could work with the county to provide the necessary middle mile infrastructure in the east, southeast, and south-central sectors.

Previous Funding - No previous funding awards in Illinois was listed but has received past federal awards for middle mile deployment.

Seeking Future Funding - Bluebird would work with the county on funding source options. Bluebird could submit a middle mile infrastructure route in future federal funding requests or with the state under any applicable funding source.

CCG Fiber / Pavlov Media

Our entire network is underground. We have fiber to the home and business in Illinois and Texas and have expansion plans in those states as well as others. In each section we would develop a middle mile network in the first years, depending on funding and supplies. From there, we would build out fiber to the homes as required under any grants and as determined by consumer interest. We also would entertain working with other providers to use our middle mile backbone to create additional connectivity options such as fixed wireless.

Previous Funding - We have not received any broadband grant funding in Illinois but are involved in another American Rescue Plan Broadband project in another state.

Seeking Future Funding - The less dense rural areas in many instances are not commercially feasible. In order to build to those areas, we would seek grant funding to make that expansion viable.

Comcast of Illinois

Comcast proposes to construct the project using all fiber-optic technology capable of providing symmetrical 1 Gbps speeds. Fiber-optic cables emanating from Comcast's network hub will be constructed to terminals directly connected to subscribers' homes, businesses, and/or community anchor institutions in Champaign County. This all-fiber network will be future-proof and highly scalable, permitting bandwidth potential well beyond foreseeable needs, fast symmetrical speeds, and low latency. Over time, the network will be readily scalable to meet consumer demands for even higher speeds and more bandwidth simply by upgrading modulating electronics within the already-deployed network. There is no end-of-life expected for this network.

Comcast proposes to expand its network in order to provide access to gigabit symmetrical service to all addresses which are located across the 6 designated areas. Comcast will start this project upon execution of a negotiated and mutually agreed upon grant agreement. In order to complete this project, Comcast will complete an engineering design, purchase equipment and materials such as fiber optic cable, provide sufficient capital labor, and structure oversight and management of the project to ensure directional boring and fiber splicing is completed on schedule.

Previous Funding - Comcast has participated in local and state broadband funding programs and has received three broadband expansion grants in Illinois.

- Connect Illinois Round 2 Leisure Time Estates – This project will provide service to 270 homes in the Leisure Time Estates subdivision in unincorporated Vermilion County. The grant amount is \$630,904.
- Connect Illinois Round 2 Sterling – This project will enable Comcast to provide broadband to 179 homes in unincorporated Whiteside County. The grant amount is \$595,300.
- Village of Mt. Zion – This project will enable Comcast to provide broadband to 28 homes in an area recently annexed by the Village of Mt. Zion. The grant amount is \$196,717. Comcast has started construction and the project is scheduled to be completed this summer.

Seeking Future Funding - Yes, Comcast has submitted for Connect Illinois grant applications proposing to provide service to all addresses across the county. Comcast committed significant capital investment in the County. The Connect Illinois program is currently paused, and it is not known if new applications will be required after the Illinois Office of Broadband has submitted draft rules to the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules. If so, a partnership with Champaign County and commitment of funding by the County will result in a more competitive application.

Digital Infrastructure Group

Congratulations on your forward-thinking initiative to bring an extensive broadband network to the constituents of Illinois. Numerous studies have concluded there are extensive benefits to improving a community's broadband expenditure. From improving a community's economic output to increasing the value of homes, fiber broadband infrastructure has predictable and tangible benefits in all communities where it is built. Digital Infrastructure Group (DIG) was founded in early 2021 by partners with multi-decade expertise in the finance, engineering, and telecom sectors. As work from home became the normal during the COVID-19 Pandemic, it became apparent North America's broadband infrastructure was insufficient to address modern day connectivity requirements. DIG knows that FTTP (fiber-to-the-premise) technology, offers vastly superior connectivity compared to satellite, fixed wireless, antiquated DSL, and coaxial cable services. Expanding FTTP, for constituents, is a top political priority in the USA and Canada.

DIG designs, builds, finances, maintains, and assists in operations of FTTP networks in North America. DIG offers a multi-toolkit of financing options, from combining public contributions with infrastructure private equity investor capital to municipal revenue-bond options from our strategic partners in the brokerage sector. DIG has also forged strategic relationships and developed proven contract mechanisms with key stakeholders. These key stakeholders are responsible for bringing a FTTP project from an idea to a fully operational network. On the design and build portions of the project, DIG has longstanding relationships in the engineering, construction, hardware, and technology industries. On the operations side, DIG has established relationships with numerous internet service providers which round-out a successful consortium for FTTP projects.

DIG brings alternative capital to the broadband space, creating the largest non-incumbent challengers in the Telecom arena. DIG is unencumbered by legacy technology and corporate behavior, and is rather, focused on bringing state-of-the-art end-to-end XGS-PON fiber solutions directly to consumers and businesses.

Previous Funding - State of Illinois for a broadband deployment in Aurora.

Seeking Future Funding - Illinois, NTIA, BEAD

Frontier Communications

Frontier proposes to install 2G symmetrical FTTH services to the eligible areas where Frontier currently serves in Champaign County. The general proximity of the areas under consideration are Fisher, Dewey, Foosland, Seymour, Bondville, Mahomet, Gifford, Penfield, Ludlow, Flatville, Rantoul, Ogden, Royal, Broadlands, Homer, Sidney, Philo, Tolono, Ivesdale, Sadorus, Pesotum, Seymour, & Bondville.

Previous Funding - Frontier participated in the FCC's Connect America Fund ("CAF") and CAF II programs and fulfilled its broadband build-out commitments under both programs. Frontier has been awarded Rural Development Opportunity Fund ("RDOF") for Illinois. Frontier affiliates have been awarded funding under state grant programs in California, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Nebraska.

Seeking Future Funding - Yes. Frontier intends to seek funding from the Connect Illinois broadband grant program.

MFWireless

MFWireless will provide a combination of both Citizens Broadband Radio Service (CBRS) Long-Term Evolution (LTE) and 5ghz fixed wireless service in each of the SW, SE, and NW areas as described in Addendum B diagram of the grant eligible areas. Each deployment will consist of fiber middle mile backhaul from the existing MFWireless core network to a tower or series of towers providing access points for each respective service. As is provided in the existing MFWireless footprint, each respective service is capable of providing internet access of speeds up to 100Mbps download and a burstable upload of 25-50Mbps. Where possible, in higher density areas MFWireless will consider fiber delivered broadband consisting of either Active Ethernet or passive optical networking (PON) last mile connectivity connected by either fiber middle mile or licensed wireless backhaul, or a combination of both.

Additionally, MFWireless has built the existing network as a dual stack network in order to provide modern access to the current network protocol stack.

Previous Funding - To date, MFWireless has been self-funded.

Seeking Future Funding - MFWireless will seek state and federal funding in the future to further expand last mile fiber.

Nextlink Internet

Nextlink proposes a hybrid deployment of fiber and supplemented with fixed wireless for the proposed coverage of Champaign County eligible areas. This hybrid approach results in high-speed internet primarily of gigabit speeds across the fiber served locations as well as a significant portion of the fixed wireless served locations.

As an internet service provider currently providing broadband in Champaign County, Nextlink is positioned to begin expanding its service across Champaign County.

Nextlink seeks to be a local company in every community that it serves. Our rapid growth has resulted in opening 3 new field offices in the State of Illinois in the past 2 years. And we've put a focus on hiring locally so that we can give back to the communities we serve. Our Illinois operations are led by the Regional Director of Operations, Jason Talley.

Previous Funding - Recipient of FCC CAF II Funding of \$35,329,530.10 to serve 15,022 households in the state of Illinois and is the preliminary winner of \$193,098,839.90 of FCC RDOF Funding to serve 68,921 households in the state of Illinois. We are awaiting our final authorization for RDOF.

Seeking Future Funding - Primarily, FCC RDOF, ARPA, BEAD, RUS Reconnect, and Connect Illinois. Nextlink is also an E-Rate provider and active participant in the Affordable Connectivity Program.

Volo.net Internet

Volo Internet is a Last Mile Fiber ISP that is already operating and has shovel ready projects for fiber network expansion in all 6 sectors, particularly of note, all proposed projects are in Grant eligible areas. With this model, every county road with a home would be within the scope and proximity of this deployment strategy.

Previous Funding - None awarded in the last 7 years.

Seeking Future Funding – Connect Illinois for last and middle programs projects.