



**Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation**

## **Regional Development Fund:**

### **Cellular Service Call for Proposals**

**Date Issued: February 7, 2020**

## **2020 Call for Proposals**

The Department of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation (TCII), through its Regional Development Fund, is requesting proposals that address gaps and deficiencies in cellular service infrastructure in unserved and underserved communities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

Administered by TCII, the objective of this cellular service call for proposals is to primarily target communities that do not have or have limited access to cellular service. The initiative is cost-shared through which TCII will contribute a maximum of 25 per cent towards project costs of cellular coverage infrastructure upgrades/enhancements where the remaining balance of 75 per cent is provided by the service provider/carriers in partnership with municipalities, private ventures and/or regional/government partnerships and where an economic development case can be demonstrated.

This initiative is focused on addressing some of the most chronically unserved, underserved and congested regions of the province and will serve as a major initiative to address the telecommunication infrastructure deficits that still exist.

Generally, most of these unserved and underserved locations are in areas that have low density populations, and are located in rural and/or remote regions of the province. This initiative will help facilitate new investments in the province's cellular service infrastructure to improve the business case for telecommunication carriers to expand coverage and provide service to communities that are currently unserved.

TCII seeks innovative and customized cellular service proposals from service providers, in partnership with communities, economic development partners and industry. TCII is seeking cost effective 'best fit' solutions that can expand and maximize cellular coverage to more communities. Partnerships using innovative use of traditional cellular protocols and other mobile broadband solutions are strongly encouraged.

### **Objectives and Expected Results**

The purpose of the cellular service call for proposals is to support cellular communications as an economic development enabler and contributor to improving the viability of communities.

Proposals submitted for funding must demonstrate economic impacts and benefits, such as:

- Sector growth within a region;
- Improved business viability in the community;
- Removal of barriers to business development growth;
- Support communities, private sector and regional economic development and diversification priorities and innovative partnerships;

- Support new and existing business needs, contributing to rural job creation opportunities;
- Support tourism development strategies to increase visitation and enhance visitor experiences;
- Improve health, public safety and security communication requirements; and
- Support other regional and municipal initiatives.

Contributions are expected to reinforce the efforts of new or existing cellular service providers to accelerate investments and build new cellular networks in unserved or underserved communities leading to an increase in the number of households, schools and businesses using cellular-dependent applications and services.

To this end, projects must target a minimal cellular service connectivity speed using Long Term Evolution (LTE) standard.

### **Eligible Proponents**

Service providers that are working in partnership with Newfoundland and Labrador organizations, such as:

- Municipalities/communities
- Non-profit community, business, economic or regional development organizations
- Other non-profit community-oriented organizations including co-operatives and other social enterprises

### **Funding Contributions**

The objective is to encourage service providers, working in partnership with communities/municipalities, regional organizations, private sector and other government partners to prepare cost-shared proposals with established funding parameters of:

- Provincial Government – maximum 25%
- Cellular service provider – minimum 50%
- Community/municipal and other government partners, other private sector, non-profit organizations – remaining balance

### **Eligible Activities**

Eligible activities will achieve the objectives of the cellular service call for proposals, including the deployment of cellular service infrastructure that establishes cellular coverage within a geographic region.

The priority is supporting activities that provide the delivery of cellular service to currently unserved or underserved communities. In areas where there is limited or congested cellular service, government will accept proposals that use innovative, creative and cost-effective employment of technologies to service these areas,

however, priority will be given to communities that are unserved with no cellular service coverage.

### **Eligible Expenses**

Eligible expenses include:

- travel considered fundamental to the implementation of the initiative;
- building material/supplies;
- machinery/equipment;
- GST/HST – applicants who are entitled to a CRA refund or credit on a portion of the GST/HST paid on goods and services deemed eligible will be allowed to claim only the portion of tax not refunded by CRA; and
- any other costs defined eligible by the department.

Any particular expenditure required for the implementation of an initiative should be itemized in the project costs.

The following activities are **not eligible** for funding consideration:

- core administrative functions of any organization;
- administration fees; and
- entertainment.

### **Proposal Requirements**

The following is required in preparing a proposal:

1. Completed RDF Application form  
([https://www.tcii.gov.nl.ca/forms/pdf/Business/rdp\\_app.pdf](https://www.tcii.gov.nl.ca/forms/pdf/Business/rdp_app.pdf))
2. Project Description
  - a. Activities of the project
  - b. Project goal(s)
  - c. Project location and current cellular service status
  - d. Project Benefits – long term potential impact on the community, business and economic development. The proposal must clearly demonstrate the number and types of businesses and any economic development initiatives and/or plans that will be impacted by the project.
3. Coverage
  - a. Type of technology to be deployed, demonstrating that it is the most effective solution for the community/region and expected resulting coverage (e.g. scope of territory covered with cellular service or telecom services including current and future coverage maps)
  - b. The application must provide an overview of the existing and future subscription base (e.g. number of subscribers), types of clients (households, schools, businesses, anchor tenants, etc.).

- c. In areas where there are a number of communities in close proximity that are unserved or underserved, the application must demonstrate that efforts were made to coordinate multiple communities in one proposal, where it is feasible and capacity exists to package a region rather than individual communities.
  - d. The application must demonstrate that long term maintenance and operations related to the infrastructure is the responsibility of the service provider.
4. Project Implementation
- a. Brief description of partner organizations including their role in the project.
  - b. Project start and finish dates – a detailed project timeline and schedule, including a critical path with key milestones. This timeline should demonstrate that the Project is well-planned and has defined activities that are logically sequenced with realistic timelines, and include an estimated start date and completion date for each Project component.
5. Project Management
- a. Capacity to manage projects - the proposal must demonstrate that the cellular service provider has the capacity to manage the project. This capacity includes both administrative and technical capabilities, and could be demonstrated by: providing a business profile of the service provider including a business history, annual revenues, years in business, province of operation, client base, and, if applicable, previous broadband funding (federal and/or provincial) received or requested for cellular service projects and the provider's business model (e.g., types of services offered) and any changes to the business model as a result of the proposed Project; providing the qualifications of the service provider management team; clearly outlining the roles and responsibilities of project team members in the implementation of the project; providing a clear description of the service provider team's capacity to deliver in areas such as engineering, designing, developing and/or operating networks; providing a proven track record in cellular service deployment or infrastructure projects of similar size and implementation pattern.
  - b. The proposal must provide a list of all project-related contractors and consultants and their roles in the proposed project. If the proponent/service provider is relying heavily on contractors or sub-contractors to implement the project, they should demonstrate that this will not create additional risks (e.g. delays).
  - c. The application must include a description of all risks it currently identifies, the level of risk, and strategies to mitigate or manage these risks. The risks identified should cover all aspects of the proposed project (e.g. design, construction, and implementation). In assessing this element, TCII will examine whether the risks mitigation strategies for each risk are reasonable, and whether they are appropriate given the level of risk (e.g. high level risks have robust mitigation strategies). In addition, TCII will

- assess whether the proponent has omitted any risks associated with the project.
- d. Note-All documents and other records in the custody of or under the control of some or all of the Government or its representatives may be subject to the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act.
6. Regulatory Requirements
    - a. Identify if any permits, licenses or environmental approvals are required.
  7. Financial Requirements
    - a. Budget Table
    - b. HST - include if applicable and requested
    - c. Itemized project costs - The proponent must complete the following:
      - Costing detail:
        - o Total cost of Project including non-eligible expenses
        - o Total cost of funding requested (eligible expenses)
        - o Detailed breakdown of eligible expenses – broken down by site
          - Construction per site
          - Power per site
      - d. Sources of funds
        - Amount requested through TCII
        - Other sources of funds
        - Total sources of funds must equal total project cost
        - Applicants/partners must demonstrate that they have secured all financial contributions prior to submitting a proposal.
      - e. Explanatory notes to accompany the budget
  8. Project Evaluation/Final Report
    - a. Outline how the project results will be measured and evaluated

### **Proposal Evaluation**

TCII encourages partnerships and collaboration for the most cost effective and innovative solutions. TCII reserves the right to assess projects based upon a) creating the greatest coverage of communities b) developing the greatest economic impact in a region or community, c) enhancing business and economic development by providing cellular service to communities, which currently do not have access to or have limited access to cellular service and d) maximum coverage to the region(s).

TCII reserves the right to make partial awards and to negotiate scope changes with proponents.

Elements of proposals will be evaluated based on compliancy with the information requested, suitability of the information, and quality/appropriateness of the proposed cellular service solution.

### **Contribution Amounts**

The contribution from TCII to the proponent will be to a maximum of 25 per cent of the eligible expenses.

### **Stacking of Assistance**

The total provincial government funding contribution permitted must not exceed 25%. All proponents will be required to inform TCII of financial assistance received or requested for the project prior to the approval of a contribution. Furthermore, the contribution agreements will contain a continuing disclosure obligation, for the duration of the agreement, concerning other government assistance.

### **Proposal Inquiries and Questions**

To address questions and inquiries, proponents should contact:

Hayward Keats  
Dept. of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation  
Telephone: 709-729-0677  
Email: [HaywardKeats@gov.nl.ca](mailto:HaywardKeats@gov.nl.ca)

Inquiries and questions from interested providers will be documented and captured as they arrive.

Inquiries and questions relating specifically to the proponent will be addressed directly back to the proponent within two (2) business days.

Inquiries and questions that may affect the outcome and scope of the call for proposals will be addressed to all proponents who have expressed an interest in submitting a proposal. These responses will be done on a weekly basis normally on a Friday of every week.

In the interest of ensuring all interested proponents are given the latest information, TCII will accept inquiries and questions up to two weeks prior to close of deadline.

### **Proposal Deadline**

The final submission date for proposals is April 30, 2020 at 4:00 p.m. **Proposals will be reviewed and assessments completed after the closing date.**

### **Proposal Submissions**

Submissions from interested proponents should be directed to:

Via Mail: Hayward Keats  
Dept. of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation  
P.O. Box 8700  
St. John's, NL A1B 4J6

Or via Email: [HaywardKeats@gov.nl.ca](mailto:HaywardKeats@gov.nl.ca)