

Request for Information
ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY AFFAIRS
Alabama Broadband Connectivity for Students Program

Issue Date: August 5, 2020

Response Due Date: 4 pm CDT August 7, 2020

Background and purpose

On July 31, 2020, Governor Kay Ivey announced the Alabama Broadband Connectivity for Students program. ABC for Students will use federal CARES Act funds to purchase internet service to connect qualifying low-income households with K-12 students so that they can participate in educational activities online, including homework and distance learning.

The following are the key priorities for the program:

1. Service must be able to support meaningful distance learning activities
2. Quality service must be equally accessible to all eligible students
3. The program should be efficient, non-burdensome, and capable of enabling service to eligible students as soon as possible

The purpose of this Request for Information is to seek commitments from qualified, established internet service providers to provide broadband internet to qualified K-12 students through a contract with the State of Alabama for purposes of participation in the ABC for Students program.

ADECA anticipates selecting multiple providers to accommodate both the large scale of the need and to capitalize on the diverse strengths of different providers, some of which will be better suited to some geographic areas than others. ADECA anticipates selected qualified providers that have a track record of providing high quality services in Alabama and that have the capabilities and network facilities to begin providing services immediately.

The estimated timeframe for this program will be from mid-August to December 30, 2020. There also exists a possibility that, if the federal government extends flexibility regarding use of CARES Act funding, the ABC for Students program may be extended through June 30, 2021. For that reason, this Request for Information seeks pricing for three elements of the program: (1) the cost for service on a per month per household basis; (2) the cost of equipment per household (if required); and (3) the cost of installation per household (if required).

ADECA anticipates participation in ABC for Students by 250,000 or more eligible households.

Anticipated scope of work

The selected providers will be required to perform the following:

1. Designate a project manager for the duration of the program, to whom the state would have access to on a full-time basis to facilitate information exchange, reporting, and problem resolution
2. Accept and process telephone or web orders from qualifying households with K-12 students for internet service starting August 17, 2020, assuming the majority will be over telephone
3. Accept payment from the qualifying household through an individualized voucher code the household will have been provided by ADECA; the voucher code will serve as payment for the services, equipment, and/or installation, such that the participating households will not have to pay the provider directly
4. Check the status of the voucher code through the designated, secure program website and then redeem the voucher code through the website when taking the order
5. Invoice ADECA on a monthly basis based on the number of voucher codes activated, using a form to be provided to successful respondents by ADECA
6. Allow eligible existing internet customers to use the voucher code to offset payment for existing service in the amount covered by the voucher. Stated otherwise, the provider must agree to accept the voucher code from existing customers and reduce those customers' future bills by the amount agreed by the provider and ADECA for monthly service for purposes of the ABC for Students Program
7. For new customers paying with the voucher, providers may not require any customer contract beyond the term of the program funding period or any other payment in addition to the voucher
8. Within the number of days agreed in the contract with ADECA, undertake one of the following:
 - a. Install service at the household, OR
 - b. Deliver to the household the necessary equipment and detailed self-installation instructions, OR
 - c. Deliver to the household a user device capable of providing the service, with detailed instructions for use
9. Provide internet service according to the technical specifications in Table 1
10. Provide all ABC for Students customers with information regarding parental controls, either provided by the provider or available from a third-party

11. Provide regular reporting to ADECA of required information, including activated users, locations of users, and redeemed vouchers, using formats to be provided to successful respondents by ADECA
12. Provide customer support of the same level of quality and during the same hours as provided to other customers of similar services who are not paying by voucher
13. Provide aggregated data regarding use and volume of use to ADECA following the end of the program, such that the data can be used to evaluate the efficacy of the program

Table 1: Technical Requirements

Capacity	A minimum of 25/3 Mbps or capable of operating at least two simultaneous virtual classroom sessions, using such applications as Zoom or Google Classroom
Latency	< 150 ms for terrestrial (non-satellite) networks
Data caps and restrictions	No limitations on time of day. Data unlimited, with at least 25 GB data per month at full speed
Wi-Fi	Capable of supporting at least five simultaneously connected devices
Equipment	Must include all necessary equipment and/or drop installation to enable service, including Wi-Fi distribution within the home
Installation	All necessary installation at the home to be included, or capability to work out-of-the-box with written instructions. If devices work out-of-the-box, delivery to be provided at home. Installation or equipment delivery with 10 days of order
Customer service	Available at least 8am to 5pm Central time, seven days a week

Respondent capabilities evaluation

Responses to the Request for Information will be evaluated based on the following criteria

1. Stated willingness to undertake the responsibilities described above
2. Cost (given a finite program budget and the need to support as many as possible qualifying students, ADECA seeks cost effective responses that will enable the maximum possible participation)
3. Technical capabilities as defined in Table 1 (ADECA seeks responses from companies that can demonstrate that their existing networks are capable of meeting the technical standards for the program)
4. Data caps or related technical parameters (ADECA may give priority to respondents that propose lower or no data caps or throttling)
5. Qualifications and track record (ADECA will prioritize providers with a track record of providing high quality services in Alabama and that have the capabilities and network facilities to begin providing services immediately)

In some cases and if the budget allows, “cells on wheels” can be funded in order to provide temporary network augmentation for improved service in strained areas. Providers who anticipate enhancing service with “Cells on Wheels” shall provide the proposed cost and description for each proposed site. Cells on Wheels funded by ADECA will be required to remain within the boundaries of the State of Alabama for their useful lives and not deployed outside State boundaries.

Process and schedule

- Issue Request for Information: August 5
- Responses due: August 7 at 4pm CDT
- Selection of provider(s): Monday, August 10
- Distribute letters to households: Anticipated for the week of August 24
- Providers install service and distribute devices: Beginning the week of August 24
- Providers invoice State: Monthly, beginning September 1, 2020

Responses should be submitted, via email, to info@ABCstudents.org by 4pm CDT on August 7, 2020. Questions regarding this Request for Information can be directed to info@ABCstudents.org.

Response Form

Respondent Information:

Respondent Name: _____

Contact Person for this Response: _____

Phone number: _____

Email address: _____

Headquarters address: _____

Headquarters address in Alabama: _____

Contact person who will lead this project and serve as point of contact to ADECA: _____

Phone number: _____

Email address: _____

Commitment regarding maximum number of days between completion of customer order and service activation (installation or receipt of equipment): _____

Estimated capacity for new service activations per week, beginning in late August: _____

Respondent Proposed Pricing

Proposed price for up to monthly service, per eligible household:

\$ _____

Proposed price for equipment necessary for service, per eligible household:

\$ _____

Proposed price for installation necessary for service, per eligible household:

\$ _____

Number of Cells on Wheels proposed for acquisition as part of this response to augment coverage for ABC for Students purposes:

Proposed cost per Cell on Wheels

\$ _____

Additional Information Required:

1. A map showing the geographic areas where service is available that meets the technical specifications described in Table 1, and where there may be limitations (e.g. likelihood of lower speed or poor performance indoors). The purpose of the map will be for the ABC for Students customer service center to assist eligible households requesting help to determine which provider(s) to call to order service
2. A map showing the location(s) proposed for Cells on Wheels, with a narrative description of how the Cells on Wheels will be used

General Terms

1. Nonresponsive Responses. Any Response that does not satisfy requirements of this Request for Information may be deemed non-responsive and may be disregarded without evaluation. Clarification or supplemental information may be required from any Respondent.
2. Rejection of Responses. ADECA reserves the right to reject any and all responses and cancel this Request if, in the exercise its sole discretion, it deems such action to be in its best interest.
3. Expenses of Response. ADECA will not compensate a Proposer for any expenses incurred in the preparation of a Response.
4. Disclosure Statement. A Response must include one original Disclosure Statement as required by Code Section 41-16-82, et seq., Code of Alabama 1975. Copies of the Disclosure Statement, and information, may be downloaded from the State of Alabama Attorney General's web site at <http://ago.alabama.gov/Page-Vendor-Disclosure-StatementInformation-and-Instructions>.
5. The Final Terms of the Engagement. Issuance of this Request for Information in no way constitutes a commitment by ADECA to award a contract. The final terms of engagement for the service provider will be set out in a contract which will be effective upon its acceptance by ADECA as evidenced by the signature thereon of its authorized representative. Provisions of this Request for Information and the accepted Response may be incorporated into the terms of the engagement should ADECA so dictate. Notice is hereby given that there are certain terms standard to commercial contracts in private sector use which the State is prevented by law or policy from accepting, including

indemnification and holding harmless a party to a contract or third parties, consent to choice of law and venue other than the State of Alabama, methods of dispute resolution other than negotiation and mediation, waivers of subrogation and other rights against third parties, agreement to pay attorney's fees and expenses of litigation, and some provisions limiting damages payable by a vendor, including those limiting damages to the cost of goods or services.

6. Beason-Hammon Act Compliance. A contract resulting from this Request for Information will include provisions for compliance with certain requirements of the Beason-Hammon Alabama taxpayer and Citizen Protection Act (Act 2011-535, as amended by Act 2012-491 and codified as Sections 31-13-1 through 35, Code of Alabama, 1975, as amended), as follows:

E-Verify Enrollment Documentation and Participation. As required by Section 31-13-9(b), Code of Alabama, 1975, as amended, Contractor that is a "business entity" or "employer" as defined in Code Section 31-13-3, will enroll in the E-Verify Program administered by the United States Department of Homeland Security, will provide a copy of its Memorandum of Agreement with the United States Department of Homeland Security that program and will use that program for the duration of this contract.

Contract Provision Mandated by Section 31-13-9(k). By signing this contract, the contracting parties affirm, for the duration of the agreement, that they will not violate federal immigration law or knowingly employ, hire for employment, or continue to employ an unauthorized alien within the State of Alabama. Furthermore, a contracting party found to be in violation of this provision shall be deemed in breach of the agreement and shall be responsible for all damages resulting therefrom.

7. The Respondent must be registered to do business with the State of Alabama through the STAARS Vendor Self-Service ("VSS"), if selected. For more information, visit VSS at <http://procurement.staars.alabama.gov>.