



RFP: Philadelphia Households Internet Assessment

Questions and Responses Submitted by 1/7/2021

1. What level of flexibility is there in the proposed timeline?

- We are looking for experienced vendors who have collected similar data or who have data already collected that could be used toward this project and would be able to quickly and accurately provide information and analysis on the number of households that are currently without internet or are relying on unstable, unreliable or low bandwidth options, and where these households are located in the city. However, if the proposed timeline does not seem feasible to vendors, we request that you document the reasons why this timeline is not adequate and propose a timeline that could accurately provide the data we are looking for in the most timely fashion possible.

2. Do you have target margins of error or sample sizes in mind for an acceptable data collection process?

- We do not have specific target margins of error or sample sizes in mind. We are looking for experienced vendors to provide us with proposals that demonstrate the reliability, statistical validity and accuracy of their methodology and data, including where there may be remaining gaps in their analysis. OIT seeks a highly accurate quantification of household internet access that will guide the City of Philadelphia and its partners to make informed policy, program and financial decisions about digital equity solutions like PHLConnectED. Through this RFP, we ask the vendors to provide us with their recommendations for capturing the most accurate data available and demonstrate to us why their methodology is sound.

3. What level of geographic granularity are you seeking for this report? Is the goal to collect a large-enough sample to report results from all 42 ZIP codes in the city?

- We are looking for the total number of households that are currently without internet or are relying on unstable, unreliable or low bandwidth options, and where these households are located in the city in as precise a fashion as possible. Philadelphia zip codes, census tracts, and by school catchment areas are all useful geographic regions to understand where there are high rates of dysconnectivity. However, for the data to be useful, the City needs to be able to aggregate results or reference the results to defined geographies



including Census Block Groups, Tracts, and zip codes as these are widely used boundaries of geographic reference for demographics, school catchments, and political boundaries, and more in order to target outreach and connectivity options.

4. In addition to English, in what other languages should the contractor offer the surveys?

- The top five languages spoken aside from English in the Philadelphia School District are: Russian, Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Arabic. Reaching immigrants and those with limited English proficiency has been challenging to date. Gathering data from these and other limited English proficiency populations around how these households are currently accessing broadband, at what speeds and with what amount of data, will be crucial to understanding the scope of the problem and precisely where to target our efforts.

5. [The RFP] mentions an interest in cross-tabulating results by age and race. Are there specific populations (age tiers, racial/ethnic populations, or other socioeconomic groups in the city) where you want to ensure a sufficient number of responses for reporting purposes?

- We want to understand the problem overall in the city; that is how many households in Philadelphia lack adequate internet access and what does this mean precisely by race/ethnicity, age, income, and location. Within this larger dataset, we seek to understand, in particular, the lack of reliable internet access among K-12 households, the racial and ethnic makeup of these K-12 households, the socioeconomic status of these households, and where they reside. We are open to meaningful analysis from the vendors to help us with operations and strategic planning around priority populations beyond the K-12 sector.

6. Under Tangible Work Products, the RFP mentions "Written reports and presentations." Could you please provide a little more detail into what is expected for this? Who will be the audience for these presentations and/or reports, and will the contractor be responsible for participating in presenting these findings (in-person or virtually) to audiences other than the Mayor's Fund?

- We ask that a full written report be provided that documents the methodology for data collection and analysis, the testing and validation methods, the statistical reliability, and the key findings. This allows the city to have a documented description of the project, the



scope, and the process used to come to the conclusions. Once a contractor is selected, the City will work with that contractor to determine the best format, length, and scope of this report. In addition, we ask that the contractor be able to present this work distilled into a slide deck to share with key stakeholders in the government. These key stakeholders may include personnel from the City's Office of Innovation and Technology, Mayor's Office of Education, the Mayor's Policy Office, the Commerce Department, the School District of Philadelphia, the Charter School Office, funders, and others deemed appropriate by OIT.

Additional Questions Submitted

7. Can you share a proposed budget allocated for this work?

- We do not have a sample or proposed budget. The Fund and the City seek vendors who can provide a cost estimate in their proposal for this assessment given its short time frame and challenging nature of the data collection and analysis due to the needed granularity and specificity of internet access/connectivity by household type. The cost estimates should be clearly broken down into a budget narrative that explains the costs associated with the project. If a longer time frame is necessary for successful outcomes, the proposal simply needs to explain why and detail a new timeline.

8. We read that analysis of Census data is already done, but insufficient. What are the specific needs of PHLConnectED operations and strategic planning that they want this assessment for? Other than benchmarking the impact of PHLConnectED?

- The City seeks to understand the most accurate accounting of households in Philadelphia, and in particular K-12 students, without adequate and reliable internet access so that we can understand the true scope of the problem and where to focus our efforts. In addition, the City seeks to understand better the entire range of options that households are accessing internet from wireline (fiber or coax cable) to the home, cellular from mobile phone hotspots or dedicated MIFIs, satellite, high bandwidth wireless paid subscription services, or use of free wireless signals available from inside the home. Understanding the limitations of the low-bandwidth options, including the data limits, speeds, and cost of the plans that are in use by households, is equally important. As the City works to develop a Digital Equity Strategy (currently underway), this data will help inform and prioritize policies around broadband solutions and support initiatives and programs to increase high speed and reliable internet access, access to devices, and training across the city, and identify the funding required for these efforts.
- Again, the City seeks to understand what data can be derived, to what extent or specificity and with what degree of accuracy.



9. How else does the City intend to apply the data?

- The city aims to apply this data to tailor public policy and investments based on a more accurate understanding of need, by location and by modes of access. The city also hopes this data will inform how to best focus and tailor outreach and community engagement programs for PHLConnectED, KEYSPOts, and other digital equity initiatives that may flow out of the Digital Equity Plan under development. Lastly, the city aims to analyze the results by location to determine if there are potential infrastructure issues at play and what solutions may be more readily adopted or increase access across the city.

10. Is the City also seeking input/recommendations on potential applications of the data beyond K-12 households?

- The City would welcome ideas, input, and recommendations on potential applications of the data towards strategies that would increase access to high speed internet, support other digital equity goals, or inform our smart city initiatives.

11. Can we propose additional digital advancement offerings that can be later leveraged by this data for future resource offerings to communities via broadband?

- Proposals may suggest additional ideas that could benefit Philadelphia based on findings from the data. Once a contractor is selected, the City may work with that contractor on a final report and data deliverables that could include actionable insights or proposed future research based on the findings.

12. When were the first round ISP datasets gathered? Was the City successfully able to geocode those addresses at the OPA Account level? Are there plans to generate a second round of these data as part of this scope?

- The City received a limited analysis from the two major wireline ISPs in Philadelphia, Comcast and Verizon, in late July 2020 which was referenced to directory-level school district and charter data current to June 2020. The City's use and access to school directory data is limited and restricted based on agreements with the district, charters and independent schools. The City has approached ISPs, including cellular providers of internet data plans in Philadelphia, to assist the City in a new analysis based on updated student



The Mayor's Fund for Philadelphia

records as of January 2021. The City retained aggregated results and not raw data.

13. Is the School District survey mentioned in the RFP not representative of any of the target populations of interest?

- The School District of Philadelphia's outreach around technology access focused on District families. SDP did not make any phone calls to Charter, IMS, etc. families. Specifically, SDP sent a technology access survey to the parents/guardians of students who opted in to receive emails and text messages from the District. This survey was sent in both English and in Spanish. In addition, SDP made calls to families to survey their technology access. These phone calls prioritized families in the zip codes assessed to have the most need. The City does not have access to the responses and provide for use in this RFP. Some charters conducted similar surveys, and the City does not have access to these responses either.

14. Are there other comparable subsidies/programs the City, ISPs or other stakeholders plan to deploy in the future? If so, how would such a program work? Would subsidies go to families? Who would be eligible? Could these data be used to plan an (person or placed-based) outreach program around increasing uptake of the subsidy? Would these data be used to inform the evaluation of a future subsidy/program?

- The City is currently in the process of creating a Digital Equity Strategy that ultimately aims to address universal internet access for all households. The methods by which this will be achieved is still being investigated, the outcomes of this RFP will help to inform this strategy. The City is exploring all modes of intervention from subsidies, sponsored programs (like PHLConnectED) and utilization of public assets in partnership to expand competition and the availability of WIFI, cellular or wireline internet services at no or low cost. We are reviewing what other municipalities and states are doing, analyzing best practices around the world, and looking at our own unique context and regulatory limitations and opportunities in Philadelphia. The data collected for this RFP will be integral in helping the City benchmark the most accurate profile of who remains disconnected or without adequate, reliable internet access, and where to focus our efforts in the future.

15. Are you also interested in learning more about device ownership, what residents do online (e.g., job search), and whether they prefer certain types of activities on certain devices?

- Although the focus of this RFP is on the range of internet and broadband access and/or lack of access, understanding the scope of who has access to working devices and any barriers to access devices will also be useful to help prioritize funding and tailor outreach and community engagement programs for our KEYSPOts, and other digital equity initiatives.



**The Mayor's Fund
for Philadelphia**

16. Is there a page limit to the proposals? Many similar proposals are limited to 10 pages.

- We have not stipulated a page limit. We ask that respondents be mindful of the length of their response.

17. Will the City / OIT provide access the data already collected?

- The City may provide access only to data that we are only legally able to share including by agreement with partners (e.g., schools). There is a wealth of City published open data including hundreds of spatial datasets at www.opendataphilly.org. We are interested in getting feedback from firms/agencies on how to best measure current internet access in Philly and who may have the ability to use commercial telecommunications and consumer data and AI.

18. Please confirm that this survey is only for wired access and not wireless access.

- It is for both. The city is looking to understand the full range of internet options that households are using both wired and wireless access. Per our RFP, "the City seeks to understand the number of households that are currently without internet or are relying on unstable, unreliable or low bandwidth options, and where these households are located in the city. By connected, we mean the entire range of options from wireline (fiber or coax cable) to the home, cellular from mobile phone hotspots or dedicated MIFIs, satellite, high bandwidth wireless paid subscription services, or use of free wireless signals available from inside the home. Understanding the limitations of the low-bandwidth options, including the data limits, speeds, and cost of the plans that are in use by households, is equally important."

19. Will the final report presentation be in person or via a conference call?

- The final report presentation can be via videoconference or telephone conference, as we recognize that applicants may be located around the world and while COVID-19 is still a threat, we will support remote meetings and presentations.

20. Please confirm that this survey is for in-home access and not free access (library, etc.).

- The city is interested in household internet access, with the caveat that there are many households that may have unstable living situations. The City seeks to understand the number of households without internet or are relying on unstable, unreliable or low bandwidth options, and where these households are located in the city. If households are without home wired internet access but are getting internet access in some other way, through their mobile phones, for example, we seek to understand how these households are getting access and at what level of service they are accessing the internet, and if this meets their needs. We are not looking to understand



**The Mayor's Fund
for Philadelphia**

where all the free public access locations, such as all the Free library locations, are around the city.

21. Will the data gathered since the launch of the PHLConnectED program in August be made available to aid vendors in submitting a proposal? Can all data accumulated and referenced in paragraph 1, page 3 of the RFP be made available to vendors submitting a proposal? Can it include the survey tool and responses?

- Any data sharing will require legal agreements and will not be shared ahead of any such agreements, save publicly available open data at opendataphilly.org. See our response to question #17 above. The School District of Philadelphia, each individual Charter school, and the City are all separate entities. The City does not have rights or access to the School District or Charter school survey data. See our response to Questions #12 and #13 above.

22. Does the City have a list of address points where the devices/subscription were implemented as a result of the PHLConnectED program and will those be made available to vendors submitting a proposal? As an example, if 18,000 households were targeted, how many were served, to determine an estimate of how many may be remaining out of that amount.

- The City is working with the SDP and Charter schools on demonstrating progress toward households targeted. However, any data sharing with outside vendors will require legal agreements and will not be shared ahead of any such agreements, save publicly available open data at opendataphilly.org. See our response to question #17 above. Additionally, we are looking for vendors who can provide the City with better, richer data than what we have to help us target our efforts and provide better benchmarking. We are interested in getting feedback from firms/agencies on how to best measure current internet access in Philly and who may have the ability to use commercial telecommunications and consumer data and AI.

23. If any of the data referenced above can't be released prior to RFP award, will it be made available after the award to the winning vendor?

- Please see our response to question #17.

24. Can you share a budget range for this project? What kind of a range you are trying to work within?

- Please see our response in Question #7.

25. Can you further explain and define what your definition of a "household" is? How is "Household" to be understood for the purposes of this initiative?



The Mayor's Fund for Philadelphia

- According to the census, "A **household** consists of all the people who occupy a housing unit. ... A person living alone in a housing unit, or a group of unrelated people sharing a housing unit such as partners or roomers, is also counted as a household." However, our ability to benchmark reliable, internet access in Philadelphia must also account for those residents who do not have a stable residence or are tied to one housing unit and how they are accessing or not accessing the internet. The city is open to vendors who can propose methods of capturing and understanding this data and can propose key insights into the state of connectivity in Philadelphia that understand the nuance of the problem and the complex range of family or household situations.

26. Can we include a budget for purchasing third party data in this proposal?

- Yes. You may include any expenses related to helping to understand the problem and collect appropriate data. Per our response to question #7, please be sure that all cost estimates are clearly broken down into a budget narrative that explains the costs associated with the project.

27. Would key stakeholders be willing to share data that is not publicly available?

- Please see our responses to questions #12, 13, 17, 21, and 22.