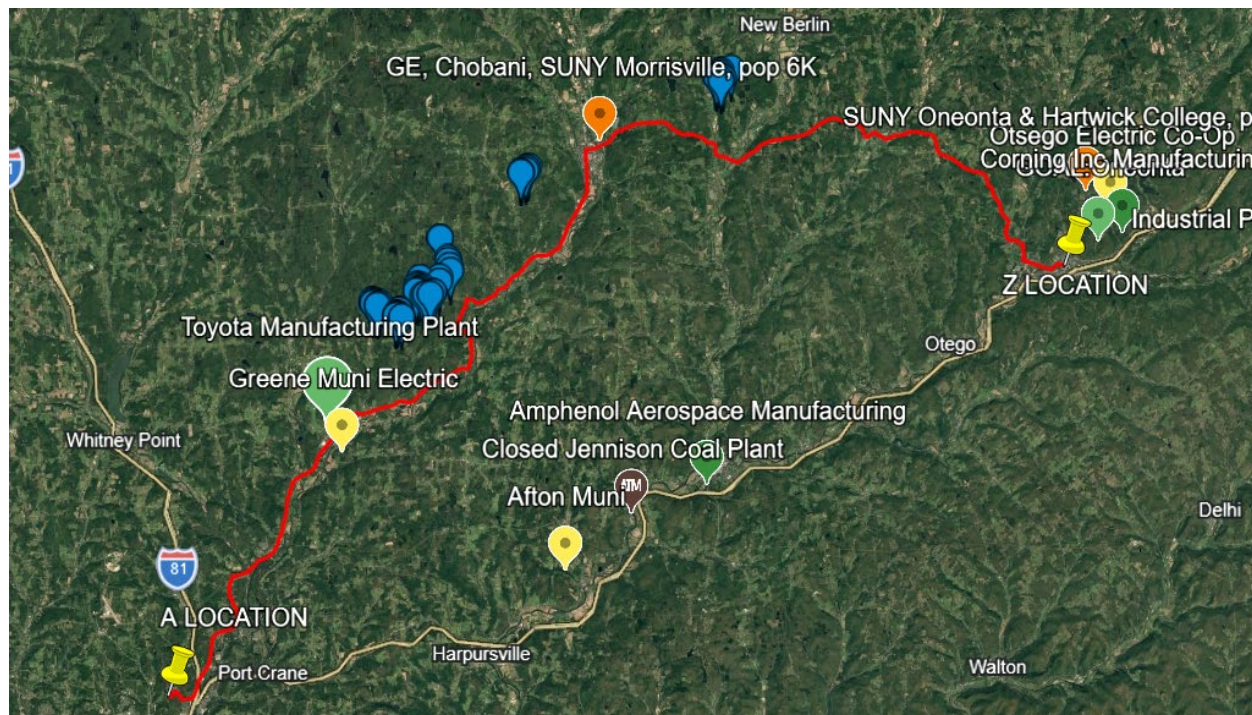


## REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL FOR FIBER NETWORK EXPANSION

February 2026

Southern Tier 8 Regional Board is seeking a provider to construct and maintain a middle-mile, open access fiber expansion From Binghamton Central Office in Broome County, throughout Chenango and Otsego County to Downtown Oneonta.



### PROJECT PURPOSE:

Southern Tier 8 Regional Board will partner with open-access provider to construct 71 miles of fiber across Broome, Chenango and Otsego Counties. This project will address a long-standing frustration of employers and employees to provide open-access middle-mile connectivity to regional employers, two municipal electric companies, three local colleges, four school districts and small business growth centers, as well as redundant pathways for local internet service providers. By enhancing broadband access and stabilizing costs for the local economies, this infrastructure investment will encourage private sector investment for economic revitalization in the heart of America's designated energy storage Tech Hub.

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### DEVELOPMENT ROUTE:

The **Determined Route** to be most beneficial to reach key economic development assets & un/underserved communities labeled in the **map**:

[https://earth.google.com/earth/d/1mG4e\\_kYvRrcFmBV\\_VubCaSMJqBd\\_RWPO?usp=sharing](https://earth.google.com/earth/d/1mG4e_kYvRrcFmBV_VubCaSMJqBd_RWPO?usp=sharing).

### PRIOR PLANNING:

Initial Planning for Key Locations and community needs have been drafted in the 2024 Connectivity Plan: [https://connecthumanity.fund/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Southern-Tier-8-Connectivity-Plan\\_Appalachia-Digital-Accelerator.pdf](https://connecthumanity.fund/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Southern-Tier-8-Connectivity-Plan_Appalachia-Digital-Accelerator.pdf)

## SECTION 1 - INFORMATION FOR PROPOSERS

Southern Tier 8 Regional Board (ST8) is soliciting Requests for Proposals (RFPs) from qualified Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and fiber infrastructure partners to form a public-private partnership to expand fiber infrastructure north in Broome County, throughout Chenango and Otsego Counties, under the Regional Board partnership with federal Appalachian Regional Commission and Economic Development Administration reimbursement funding.

ST8 will select its partner primarily based on the proposed buildout and operations plan, and proposal alignment with goals for connecting key economic development locations, areas of under/unserved, experience with federal grants, readiness to meet construction deadlines and cost estimate secured by the funding agencies, that includes:

ARC POWER: For the buildout expenses across Broome, Chenango and Otsego Counties.  
EDA: For the buildout expenses across Broome and Chenango Counties only. (eligibility of disaster declaration 2024 DR-4825-NY Storm Debby).

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This procurement is structured as a three-stage partnership:

Stage 1 – **Application Partnership**: Select a broadband partner to collaborate with the Regional Board to assist with the completion of competitive ARC & EDA applications by **April 8, 2026**.

Stage 2 – **Network Build & Operations** (Contingent on Awards): As Southern Tier 8 Regional Board receives ARC POWER and EDA funding, the selected partner will be responsible for make-ready development, construction costs to build the network (following a Reimbursement schedule), then to operate, and maintain the broadband network described in its proposal.

Stage 3- As full funding is awarded to Southern Tier 8 Regional Board, the partner would **provide affordable, reliable, middle-mile fiber access to on-route communities** in Broome, Chenango and Otsego, and maintain municipal fiber access costs, support last-mile access (perhaps with other local last-mile partners) to provide affordability options in areas that are currently unserved and underserved (58 households), connect critical infrastructure, and enhance economic development opportunities.

### THE BUILD:

- a. Grant Funds will be used to for make-ready costs (pole attachments) and construction of **71 miles of fiber** from the Binghamton Central Office in Broome County, 17 miles north to the Village of Greene (Home to Toyota Materials Handling and Greene Electric), then proceed 22 miles north to Norwich NY (Unison/GE Aerospace; Woods Corners Economic Development Site, formerly a Chobani Warehouse & City of 6,600) then 31 miles East via Route 23 to Oneonta (expanding Industrial areas with IOXUS, Apple Converting, Inc; Corning, Inc; SUNY Oneonta, Hartwick College and City of 16K.)

### SECTION 2 – THE PROPOSAL SELECTION PROCESS:

- a. The RFP process should be viewed as a confidential marketing effort. All data provided with this RFP should be treated as confidential data of Southern Tier 8 Regional Board and should not be disclosed to any third parties.
- b. Proposer's Responsibilities: It is the Proposer's responsibility to meet the entire intent of these specifications. Proposers shall carefully examine the terms of this document and shall judge for themselves all the circumstances and conditions affecting their proposal. Failure on the part of any Proposer to make such examination and to investigate thoroughly shall not be grounds for any declaration that the Proposer did not understand the terms and conditions herein. Southern Tier

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8 Regional Board shall not be liable for any costs associated with the preparation, transmittal, or presentation of any response or materials submitted in response to the RFP.

- c. Communications: All communications regarding this RFP shall be addressed to **Shane Butler, Chenango County Director of Planning & Airport Administrator** via email [ShaneB@chenangocountyny.gov](mailto:ShaneB@chenangocountyny.gov) No telephone questions will be accepted or considered. Proposers are specifically directed not to contact any other County officials or employees in any fashion regarding this RFP. Southern Tier 8 Regional Board will not be responsible for any oral instructions or representations. As questions or clarifications are submitted via email, please request a read receipt confirmation.
- d. Scope Parameters: If a Proposer identifies an additional element not included in this RFP, which in its judgment would be essential to accomplish the intended objectives as articulated in this RFP, the Proposer should identify this element in its proposal and explain in detail why ST8 should consider including this element within the scope of services. Conversely, if a Proposer identifies a task within the RFP that it believes could be modified or deleted without impacting the objectives of the RFP, the Proposer should provide an explanation as to why the task should be deleted or modified. ST8 reserves the right to accept or reject all additions, deletions or modifications recommended.
- e. Proposer's Qualifications & Eligibility: ST8 may make such investigation as it deems necessary to determine the qualifications and ability of a Proposer, and the Proposer shall promptly furnish ST8 all such information and data as requested ST8 reserves the right to reject any proposal where an investigation of the available evidence or information does not satisfy ST8 that the Proposer is properly qualified or able to carry out the obligations of the contract and to provide the services contemplated herein.
- f. Award: The awarding of a contract for the work outlined in this RFP is subject to the approval of ST8. Award decisions will be made public as soon as possible. ST8 reserves the right to reject any and all proposals.
- g. The Proposer must provide unquestionable evidence of sustained capability of providing the services requested and proposed, such as can be demonstrated in existing or previous operations. ST8 may award a contract based upon the proposals received, without discussion of such proposals with proposers. Each proposal should, therefore, be submitted in the most favorable terms the proposer can make to ST8. ST8 does, however, reserve the right to request additional data or an oral presentation in support of the written RFP. Submission of an RFP does not

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automatically qualify a proposer for a presentation. ST8 reserves the right to negotiate with all qualified proposers.

- h. ST8, in accordance with the provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and New York State Executive Law affirmatively ensures that the contract will be awarded without discrimination on the grounds of race, creed, color, disability, marital status, age, sexual orientation or natural origin.
- i. Submission of a proposal constitutes acknowledgment that the Proposer understands and will comply with contracts between Southern Tier 8 Regional Board and ARC and EDA funding entities, following reporting guidelines.
- j. With federal grant funding, the selected firm will comply with prevailing wage requirements in the federal Davis-Bacon law and domestic supply component requirements of the Davis-Bacon and Related Acts (DBRA) and Build America, Buy America Act (part of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, Pub. L. 117-58; BABA requirements).

### SCORING/EVALUATION:

Proposals will be evaluated on the criteria outlined below, with a maximum possible score of 100 points.

Every proposal submitted will be reviewed in accordance with the following criteria:

#### **Team Profile and Organization- up to 20 points:**

- Firm profile detailing history and qualifications.
- Organizational Chart identifying key staff, responsibilities, and qualifications, and what work will be completed in-house vs sub-contractor.
- Please provide references of other communities in New York State where your firm has completed similar projects.

#### **Network Description/ Solution within budget and contingencies– up to 30 points:**

- Provide a detailed description of the proposed solution, covering areas and key economic development locations, with a timeline of milestones and completion dates.
- Describe any benefits that your proposed system may provide that enhance performance in ways that are not otherwise documented in your proposal.
- Provide details on access and coverage, in particular details for those mapped on the route.
- Provide maps detailing all areas including any additional beyond the unserved/underserved areas that you propose to provide services to.

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- Describe how the proposed network design will incorporate industry standard redundancy, including but not limited to any cost benefits.
- Acknowledge cost benefits beyond the industry standard.
- Flexibility of proposed project to foster future expansion and connection to additional networks.

### **Proposed Costs and Funding Strategy – up to 30 points:**

- Ownership: Following RFP award, a MOU will be drafted for a sub-recipient grant agreement, with award notification, to be signed and the provider will be the sub-recipients on the granting contracts and owner of the complete network.
- Overall Budget for entire scope of work detailed by category, where applicable, including investment from provider and grant eligible areas, for:
  - Planning, surveying, and permitting
  - Procure make-ready cost from all pole owners and/or right of way access/easements
  - Construction costs, including contingencies and incidentals
  - Project completion plan with timeline
  - Closeout

### Budget Categories for Federal Grants:

**Administrative and Legal Expenses:** Costs associated with project administration, legal fees, and closing costs.

**Land, Structures, Rights-of-Way, Appraisals, etc.:** Costs for acquiring land, existing structures, or easements.

**Relocation Expenses and Payments:** Costs for moving people or businesses displaced by the project.

**Architectural and Engineering Fees:** Basic fees for design, plans, and specifications.

**Other Architectural and Engineering Fees:** Fees for specialized services like surveys, tests, and soil borings.

**Project Inspection Fees:** Costs for inspecting the construction to ensure compliance with plans.

**Site Work:** Costs for site preparation, clearing, and restoration not covered in the main contract.

**Demolition and Removal:** Costs for tearing down existing structures.

**Construction:** The primary cost of the construction contract.

**Equipment:** Costs for equipment, machinery, and furniture to be installed or used, if not included in the construction contract.

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**Miscellaneous:** Other costs not covered in the above categories (e.g., non-infrastructure elements).

**Contingencies:** Funds set aside for unexpected costs, generally based on historical data for similar projects.

### **Pricing Strategy – up to 20 points:**

- a) Provide examples of availability and pricing options for middle-mile and last-mile services, partnerships that may sustain the expansion.
- b) Information should include low-cost options for moderate to low-income households, with commercial options at peak speeds offered to potential commercial and industrial customers.
- c) Additional options for education, not for profit, and government institutions should be made available based on level and years of service contracts.

### **SELECTION PROCEDURES:**

1. After an initial review and evaluation of each of the proposals, the Proposers submitting the most highly rated proposals may be invited for interviews prior to final selection, to further clarify their proposals. ST8 reserves the right to award a contract without holding interviews, in the event the written proposals provide a clear preference on the basis of the criteria described.
2. The Contractor(s) selected for this project will be required to accept ST8's subrecipient agreement and comply with insurance standards as deemed by the funding agencies. No agreement with Southern Tier 8 Regional Board is in effect until both parties have signed a contract.

### **FUNDING PROGRAMS:**

**The successful Proposer shall partner with the ST8 to finalize an EDA application and ARC Basic Agency request, pursuant to EDA Disaster Relief Funding by April 8, 2026.**

EDA Guidelines: <https://www.eda.gov/strategic-initiatives/disaster-recovery/supplemental/2025>

ARC POWER Guidelines: <https://www.arc.gov/grants-and-opportunities/power/power-initiative-application-information/>

No Commitment: This RFP does not in any way commit Southern Tier 8 Regional Board to the award of a contract and/or pay any cost incurred in the preparation of this proposal in response to the RFP or to procure or contract these services. ST8 reserves the right to

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accept or reject any and/or all proposals received as a result of this RFP, or to negotiate with the most qualified proposer or to cancel the RFP in part or in its entirety if it is in the best interest of the organization's member counties.

Method of Payment: Payments shall be defined with the grant awards and sub-recipient agreements, as reimbursement with funded federal contracts.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

The proposer may include any other information, brochures or documentation that may further illustrate the firm's abilities or experience.

The proposer should discuss their approach, preference, or recommendation relative to the Services described herein. The proposer should identify if they can or would offer these services, and/or if there would be any implications to either their proposed fee or basic services depending upon the owner's decision in this regard.

### FORMAT & DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTAL:

A sealed hardcopy document OR digital copy on a USB Flash Drive is to be delivered to **Lolene Cornish c/o Southern Tier 8 Regional Board, 49 Court St, Suite 222 Binghamton, NY 13901 by 2pm 2/26/26**. The outside of the envelope is to be labeled "**Regional Fiber Expansion Proposal**".

### ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND:

The Southern Tier 8 Regional Board (ST8) was established in 1968 as a special purpose local government unit under Articles 5G and 12B of New York State's General Municipal Law. It operates under authority by joint resolution of the legislative bodies of our member counties: Broome, Chenango, Cortland, Delaware, Otsego, Schoharie, Tioga, and Tompkins. The board is comprised of representatives from both the public and private sectors.