



## **Wi-Fi Hotspot Initiative Expression of Interest**

Date Issued: April 28, 2025

## **2025 Expression of Interest**

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is committed to working with partners to support strategic investments through innovative and best-fit solutions for connectivity improvements along major highways and in underserved areas of the province.

The Department of Industry, Energy, and Technology (IET) has explored ways to reduce connectivity gaps on major highways and in rural and remote communities, where access to power and infrastructure may be a limiting factor. In 2024, as a pilot project, IET supported the installation of two solar-powered, satellite-enabled Wi-Fi Hotspots along the Burgeo Highway, providing Internet connectivity and Wi-Fi calling capabilities in these two designated areas along Route 480.

As an expansion of the pilot, IET is seeking interest from communities and economic development partners to implement the installation of additional Wi-Fi hotspots in the province that address gaps and deficiencies in connectivity along major highways and in unserved and underserved communities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

### **Objectives**

The purpose of the Wi-Fi hotspot initiative is to support enhanced connectivity along highways and underserved communities with little to no connectivity.

Submissions under the Wi-Fi Hotspot Initiative must demonstrate benefits to the area, such as:

- Supporting communities, regional economic development, diversification priorities and innovative partnerships;
- Advancing opportunities for sustainable economic growth in a region or sector;
- Enhancing tourism experiences and opportunities;
- Addressing connectivity barriers for residents, organizations, and businesses;
- Improving public health and safety;
- Supporting other regional and municipal initiatives.

Proponents must demonstrate their experience in managing initiatives of a similar size in addition to demonstrating their plans to design, install, monitor, and provide ongoing maintenance and support for a minimum of two years. Project proposals must include plans to engage with partners that have experience in providing Wi-Fi infrastructure and services.

### **Eligible Proponents**

Existing Newfoundland and Labrador organizations with an economic and/or community development-focused mandate, including, but not limited to:

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

## **Eligible Activities**

IET will consider support for normally one (1) Wi-Fi hotspot within an underserved community and normally up to two (2) hotspots along a major highway.

Priority will be given to communities and major highways with little to no connectivity, and submissions that express notable benefits and the ability to implement and maintain the infrastructure for project success.

## **Eligible Expenses**

Eligible expenses include:

- Equipment necessary for site operation, including but not limited to:
  - Satellite or other high-speed Internet system
  - Power supply (i.e. solar panels, batteries, chargers, cables) or existing electrical connection
  - Weather proofing equipment
- Building material/supplies for site installation
- Consultant fees for technical services and training
- Service subscription costs for a two-year period
- Travel, if fundamental to the implementation of the initiative
- 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
- Any other project-related materials and costs necessary and deemed eligible by IET to undertake an approved project.

Expenditures 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
- Travel for the purposes of gathering support for an initiative, and
- Entertainment.

## **Funding Contributions**

IET will normally consider up to 100% of eligible project costs, to a **maximum of \$30,000** per approved site.

Upon project approval, proponents may: 1) request reimbursement for eligible expenses through submission of receipts and invoices after implementation, or 2) request an advance payment up to 90% of approved funds to cover eligible expenses, with a 10% holdback until Hotspot is installed and operational.

## **Proponent Responsibilities**

Proponents will be responsible for:

- procuring technical expertise, as required;
- identifying potential Hotspot location(s) and satisfying location requirements – See *Submission Requirements #3 on Page 4*
- purchasing equipment and subscription service;
- site preparation and equipment installation in accordance with permits and regulations;
- displaying Government of Newfoundland and Labrador signage, as provided;
- site and operational monitoring for minimum of two years;
- trouble shooting, maintenance and repair costs;
- site upkeep, including safe vehicle access to site during winter;
- and other in-kind costs necessary for project success.

Proponents must notify IET of any operational issues or concerns during the two-year pilot period and provide a report after Year 1 and Year 2 on the outcomes, benefits, and lessons learned during the pilot.

Selected Hotspot sites must be identified by approved Government of Newfoundland and Labrador Wi-Fi Hotspot signage that will be provided. Signage shall be displayed in accordance with Government's signage standards and regulations.

Proponents are responsible for monitoring and maintenance costs as noted for a two-year period unless pilot is terminated early by mutual agreement. To continue site operations *after* the completion of the pilot, proponents will be responsible for any related operational and maintenance costs including service subscription. Should the proponent decide to cease support of a Hotspot, including monitoring and maintenance *after* the pilot's duration, IET shall be notified to discuss operational plans such as transfer of ownership or decommission plans.

## **Submission Requirements**

The following is required in preparing a submission:

### **1. Project Description**

- Activities of the project;
- Project goal(s);
- Community or regional information, including population to be served, economic drivers in the area, and existing connectivity barriers;
- Project benefits and potential impact on the community, businesses, and regional economic development;
- Ability and likelihood of maintaining Hotspot(s) post-pilot.

### **2. Proponent Details**

- Information about the organization and capacity to manage project, including administrative, labour, and technical capabilities;
- Brief description of any partner organizations required for project completion;
- List of all project-related contractors and consultants and their proposed roles.

### **3. Hotspot Location Details**

- a. Location description and latitude/longitude coordinates, if known;
- b. Land ownership, permits, licenses or environmental approvals required;
- c. Vehicle pull-off/parking details;
- d. Available on-site power or solar power requirements;
- e. Benefits of location proposed.

### **4. Financial Requirements**

- a. Budget table listing total project costs and eligible expenses, including expenditures required for the implementation, itemized per site;
- b. HST and relevant rebates if applicable;
- c. Sources of funding;
- d. Funding request;
- e. Explanatory notes, including financial ability to cover project obligations;
- f. For regional projects, costs and funding per community/region should be clearly identified.

Proponents that are working through details of a potential project are welcome to submit an Expression of Interest and should complete at a minimum:

- Section #1 (Project Description)
- Section #2 (Proponent Details),
- Information of the general area,
- Benefits of having a hotspot in the area, and
- Steps being taken to meet submission requirements.

Proponents are welcome to discuss previous pilot, current initiative parameters, and potential site details with IET staff at any time during the submission or implementation phases.

All submission requirements must be met for a project to be considered for approval. Proponents of selected projects will be required to submit an application for funding. Hotspot location selection will be required prior to distribution of funds.

Final decisions for Wi-Fi hotspot projects under this initiative will be at the sole discretion of IET.

### **Evaluation Criteria**

IET reserves the right to advance projects based upon:

- a) Meeting eligibility criteria;
- b) Existing and potential connectivity in communities and along major highways;
- c) Benefits and impact in a region or community;
- d) Demonstrated ability to successfully complete the project and likelihood of maintaining Hotspot post-pilot;
- e) Budget availability.

Submissions will be evaluated based on eligibility, suitability, and quality and must meet the criteria of the initiative.

**Submission Date**

Expression of Interest must be made in writing. 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, 2015*.

Submissions are to be submitted via email to:

**Dion Sheppard**  
**Dept. of Industry, Energy and Technology**  
**Telephone: 709-729-7274**  
**Email: [ddsheppa@gov.nl.ca](mailto:ddsheppa@gov.nl.ca)**

All communication regarding this Expression of Interest shall be directed to the contact noted above.

There is no deadline for the submission of applications. The EOI will remain open until ten successful pilot projects are awarded or until all pilot funding has been utilized, which comes first. IET will provide written confirmation that the submission is received.

IET reserves the right not to accept any submission, to cancel and/or re-issue this Expression of Interest at any time, without penalty or cost to Government.

IET reserves the right to discuss proposed solution(s) in whole and in part with proponent(s) and communities who expressed interest; to accept any submission in whole or in part; or to accept subsequent project applications from any proponent(s) for any or all aspects of their submission. IET does not bind itself to accept potential projects from sole proponents, lowest priced solutions, highest ranked submissions, or any of the submissions received through this Expression of Interest