GRAFTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

603-787-6941
603-787-2656 Fax

3855 Dartmouth College Highway Box 1
North Haverhill, NH 03774

NOTICE OF REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Grafton County is soliciting proposals for:
Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to partner, operate, and support the Middle Mile Network.

Proposal Invitation #: 2026-RFP01ISP

Proposal For: Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to partner, operate, and support the Middle Mile Network.

Proposal Due Date: November 03, 2026, 12:00 PM EST

Address: 3855 Dartmouth College Highway, Box #1
North Haverhill, NH 03774
Attn: Samantha Norcross
snorcross@graftoncountynh.gov

1. Description:

Grafton County, New Hampshire, is currently accepting proposals supporting its Middle Mile initiative to improve internet coverage throughout the County. It is the goal of this RFP (Request for Proposal) to identify and select one or more Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to partner with, operate, and support the Middle Mile Network (MMN) as the infrastructure is being built over the next few years. The County intends to provide the middle mile as the backbone for ISPs and Towns to use. The County views fiber optic-based internet service availability as a high priority.

The County is committed to building a countywide middle mile fiber backbone network connecting 25 municipalities in Grafton County and Plymouth State University. Under an agreement with the county, the selected ISP(s) will have priority access to the middle mile infrastructure dark fiber on a nondiscriminatory open access basis.

This RFP will identify, select, and form partnership(s) with one or more qualified ISPs who can utilize the publicly owned countywide middle mile fiber-optic backbone. The selected ISPs will utilize the middle mile as the backbone to deploy FTTH and provide internet services to underserved communities.

COMMISSIONERS

Wendy A. Piper *(603) 632-7179*
Martha S. McLeod *(603) 491-0542*
Katie Wood Hedberg *(603) 254-6873*

Grafton County Towns currently have uneven internet access and speeds, leaving many parts of the county underserved or unserved. Most of the current internet service is provided by a limited group of existing ISPs. However, not all ISPs provide service to all Towns or all areas within a town. ISPs currently operating in Grafton County, as well as ISPs interested in expanding services into the County, are encouraged to respond to this RFP. Satellite and cellular companies will not be considered for this RFP because they are not fiber-to-the-premise based and have significant download cap limitations that make them unsuitable for practical use in homes and businesses. The County intends to provide residents with 100MB+ internet service in as many areas as possible throughout the County. The County views fiber-optic-based internet service availability as a high priority.

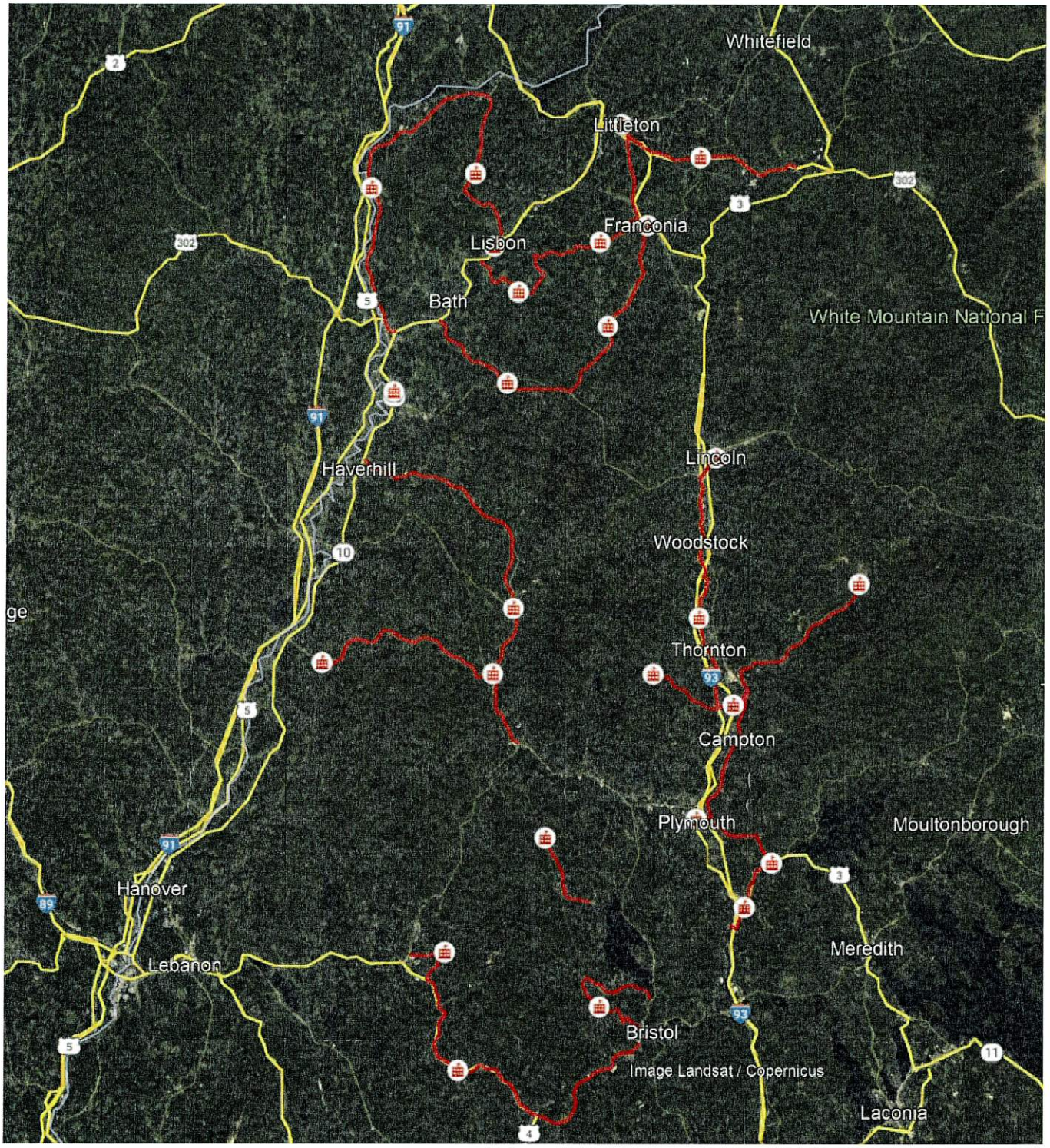
The County has been approved for an NTIA grant to help fund this middle mile fiber project. It is open to proposal models that help it achieve the desired service and meet its financial goals. A successful proposer will partner with the County and is open to growing/evolving relationships through other network uses once the base broadband need is met.

2. Project Areas:

Grafton County, NH, is part of the Claremont-Lebanon, NH-VT Micropolitan Statistical Area and is home to Dartmouth College and Plymouth State University. The proposed project service area encompasses Grafton County, which had a population of 89,118, according to the 2010 census. The table and map below depict the area to be served by the network. This area includes 25 municipalities and Plymouth State University that will have access to the proposed Grafton County middle mile fiber network. The fiber infrastructure will be available to any ISP or private entity on a discounted, wholesale, open-access basis, reducing the barrier to entry and allowing service providers to enter new, underserved markets within the County. Access to the high-speed middle mile connection will ensure that the selected municipalities within the County are equally served with a dark fiber backbone that can support last-mile speeds of more than a minimum of 100Mbps up to 1Gbps to all homes and businesses.

Location	Address	Town/City	State	Zip
Alexandria Town Hall	47 Washburn Road	Alexandria	NH	03209
Ashland Town Hall	20 Highland Street	Ashland	NH	03217
Benton Town Hall	221 Coventry Road	Benton	NH	03785
Bethlehem Town Hall	2155 Main Street	Bethlehem	NH	03574
Campton Town Office	12 Gearty Way	Campton	NH	03223
Easton Town Hall	1060 Easton Valley Road	Easton	NH	03580
Ellsworth Town Hall	3 Ellsworth Pond Road	Ellsworth	NH	03223
Franconia Town Hall	421 Main Street	Franconia	NH	03580
Grafton Town Office	E Grafton Road	Grafton	NH	03240
Groton Town Hall	754 North Groton Road	Groton	NH	03241
Haverhill Town Hall	2975 Dartmouth College Highway	No. Haverhill	NH	03774
Holderness Town Hall	1089 US-3	Holderness	NH	03245

Landaff Town Hall	12 Center Hill Road	Landaff	NH	03585
Lincoln Town Hall	148 Main Street	Lincoln	NH	03251
Lisbon Town Hall	46 School Street	Lisbon	NH	03585
Littleton Town Hall	125 Main St., Suite 200	Littleton	NH	03561
Lyman Town Office	65 Parker Hill Road	Lyman	NH	03585
Monroe Town Hall	152 Woodsville Road	Monroe	NH	03771
Orange Municipal Building	8 Town House Road	Orange	NH	03741
Orford Town Hall	2529 NH Route 25A	Orford	NH	03777
Plymouth State University	Highland Street	Plymouth	NH	03564
Sugar Hill Town Hall	1411 NH Route 117	Sugar Hill	NH	03586
Thornton Town Hall	16 Merrill Access Road	Thornton	NH	03285
Warren Town Hall	8 Water Street	Warrant	NH	03279
Wentworth Town Hall	7 Atwell Hill Road	Wentworth	NH	03282
Waterville Valley	14 TAC Lane	Waterville Valley	NH	03215


Whitefield
Littleton
Franconia
Lisbon
Bath
White Mountain National F
Haverhill
Lincoln
Woodstock
Thornton
Campton
Plymouth
Moultonborough
Hanover
Lebanon
Meredith
Bristol
Image Landsat / Copernicus
Laconia
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3. Minimum Requirements:

ISPs are expected to utilize dark fiber from the middle mile to provide fast, reliable internet for everyday operations, home needs, telework, telemedicine, distance learning, and research. It should be available for businesses, municipal/County, school buildings, and all residences. The towns require the ISPs to provide services that establish a minimum speed of 100mb synchronous connection with one (1) gig available. High-tech businesses may require higher delivery speeds. The ISP will be required to operate and manage the network and assets and work with pole owners. The County is willing to work with providers regarding siting equipment, e.g., poles on the right of ways or distribution equipment. ISPs will be responsible for maintaining its infrastructure on the County's middle mile network. Once qualified ISPs are selected, their information will be introduced to the County's and the Town's planning, engineering, permitting, and construction middle mile contractors. The County expects the proposer to evaluate and recommend the best way to deliver services. It will be the ISP's responsibility to recommend the final network electronics and switching equipment. The method of funding, building out, and ownership of the dark fiber infrastructure will be negotiated with Grafton County in the agreement. As an incentive to the selected towns, the ISP shall provide one fiber internet connection to the towns that house their equipment.

4. Proposal Elements:

Although the format is at the discretion of the respondent, proposals must include:

- A cover letter with the name, signature, and title of the person authorized to commit your company to the proposal terms. The letter must include an acknowledgment that the company agrees to partner with Town(s) and provide future financial and operational support for future FTTH networks.
- Professional qualifications of your company and team demonstrating the skill, ability, and integrity necessary to deliver internet service to each subscriber faithfully.
- Three examples and references of other locations providing FTTH internet service.
- Business model for how you envision partnering with the County and the Towns. The model narrative must include the maximum per home passed financial contribution your company would consider when assisting the County in building out its middle mile infrastructure.
- The cost of monthly service for different performance specifications, including rental of all equipment and if there is a time commitment for such pricing (business, residential, and municipal customers). If data caps are part of the service, they must be specified and should be high enough that a family of four (4), with students, will not reach the cap.
- Cost for business, residential, and municipal customers for premise equipment.
- Any other associated costs.

- Provide a description of the technology used by your company and how it meets the specifications.
- Guarantees of service call response times.
- Any alternative proposals that include elements of additional private funding support of the middle mile.

Pricing Form:

Item Description	Minimum Speed	Price Per Month	Maximum Speed	Price Per Month
Residential Class Service				
Data Caps (N/A or Identify)				
Service Connection Fee (One-time Charge)				
Equipment Rental Fee (Monthly)				

Item Description	Minimum Speed	Price Per Month	Maximum Speed	Price Per Month
Business Class Service				
Data Caps (N/A or Identify)				
Service Connection Fee (One-time Charge)				
Equipment Rental Fee (Monthly)				

Item Description	
Maximum per home contribution	
Any other costs please identify here	

5. Schedule:

The following is the schedule for this process. It is for informational purposes only and may change depending on circumstances.

Activity	2024 Event Anticipated Date
Written Question Deadline (via email only)	October 26th by 12:00 pm
Addenda Published with answers to questions	October 28th by Close of Business
Proposal Due Date	November 3rd by 12:00 pm

Questions regarding this RFP shall be submitted via e-mail. No phone calls, please. Questions will be accepted and answered per the terms and conditions of this RFP. Answers will be shared with all respondents on the Bids/Proposals page of the County website: https://grafton-county.com/all-departments/broadband-project/

Questions are due and must be emailed to the County contact, Holly Elsholz, at helsholz@graftoncountynh.gov on or before 12:00 pm on October 26, 2026. Responses will be provided by October 28, 2026, by the close of business.

Should any prospective company be in doubt about the true meaning of any portion of this RFP, or if the company finds any ambiguity, inconsistency, or omission therein, the company shall make a written request via email for an official interpretation or correction by the due date above.

All interpretations, corrections, or additions to this RFP will be made only as an official addendum posted to the Bids/Proposals page of the County's website. The company shall be responsible for ensuring it has received all addenda before submitting a proposal. Any addendum issued by the County shall become part of the RFP and must be incorporated in the proposal where applicable.

Proposals are due and must be emailed to the County contact, Samantha Norcross, at snorcross@graftoncountynh.gov on or before 12:00 pm on November 3, 2026. Proposals submitted late will not be considered or accepted.

Each respondent must submit an electronic copy of the proposal in PDF format by email to Samantha Norcross. Due to the high volume of emails received, respondents are advised to send an email before the proposal is sent advising that the proposal will be coming in a subsequent email.

Proposals submitted must be clearly marked Grafton County ISP Proposal and list the company's name and address in the subject line.

The County will not be liable to any company for unforeseen circumstances, delivery, or delays. Companies are responsible for submitting their proposals. Additional time will not be granted to

a single company; however, at the discretion of the County, additional time may be given to all companies.

Proposals that fail to provide the required documentation in complete form upon proposal opening will be deemed non-responsive and may not be considered.

After proposals are received, Grafton County will review the proposals and recommend the qualified ISP partner or partners. Final approval and acceptance will be conducted at a formal Grafton County Commissioners' Meeting.

NETWORK OPERATOR SERVICES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Owner seeks to select a Respondent(s) to operate, maintain, market, sell, and extend the Open Access Middle Mile Network (MMN), which will provide high-speed, wireless, and fiber broadband services to homes, businesses, and community anchor organizations.

The operator shall not be the recipient of any grant funds under this RFP or associated network operations agreement.

Key responsibilities include:

- The Network Operator shall be responsible for the operation and maintenance of the MMN and assume all duties of running a commercial broadband business, including all outside plant, inside plant, equipment, facilities, and access.

- The Network Operator shall provide real-time access to certain records, maintain accurate and up-to-date network documentation, and submit periodic reports about the MMN.

- The Network Operator shall maintain a complete audit trail of all financial and non-financial transactions arising from or in connection with the MMN's operations and maintenance.

- The Network Operator shall prepare and periodically update a network operations plan for the Owner's review.

- The Network Operator shall prepare a network implementation plan for the Owner's review. The plan will provide a step-by-step approach to implementing and finalizing the network to place it in ready-for-service status.

- The Network Operator and Owner will mutually and regularly consult with each other to coordinate the approval, financing, and construction of network expansions that may be funded by the Owner and/or the operator.

- The Network Operator is solely and fully responsible for the marketing, provisioning, and supporting all services to customers and shall comply with all regulatory requirements,

applicable laws, applicable standards, acceptable use policies, authorizations, and specified performance requirements.

- The Network Operator shall provide high-speed, reliable internet services to homes, businesses, community anchor organizations, and other potential network users.

- The Network Operator shall provide at minimum one free high-speed, reliable internet service connection to each town.

- Except for certain allowable costs permitted by grant regulations, the Network Operator is responsible for the ongoing costs of operating and maintaining the MMN.

- The owner is responsible for all capital expenses for the MMN as funded by the grant, including fiber and wireless design and construction, permitting, equipment, capital leases, and related costs. This obligation ends when the MMN is completed.

- The owner will procure the services of one or more prime contractors responsible for building the fiber and wireless infrastructure.

- The Network Operator is responsible for providing total counts of GRAFTON COUNTY Households served to support the Owner's reporting requirements.

- The grant provides no funding for the monthly service charges to residents, whether they are GRAFTON COUNTY Households or non-GRAFTON COUNTY Households

- The Network Operator shall provide a performance bond ("Performance Bond") in a penal sum equal to two million dollars ("two million") that shall remain in place for the Term of the Agreement.

- The Network Operator shall operate and maintain a NOC that monitors the MMN twenty-four (24) hours a day, seven (7) days a week and is staffed with trained and qualified personnel. The network operations center will provide frontline customer service and support, technical support, network monitoring and maintenance, reporting, and other functions commensurate with running an ISP.

- The Network Operator shall meet or exceed commercially reasonable Service Level Agreement performance standards for broadband internet services, including proactive notification of outages, outage management, standard and emergency maintenance, and quality monitoring of key metrics such as availability, packet loss, and latency. Network performance metrics will be defined through the testing process to determine speed, availability, packet loss, and latency.

- The Network Operator shall establish and comply with written policies and procedures for ensuring the physical and cybersecurity of the MMN, such as maintaining and following a Written Information Security Program ("ISP"), a Cybersecurity Policy for the

Network that includes an information security plan and an incident response plan, that is compliant with NIST Cybersecurity Framework or similar industry cybersecurity framework.

- The Network Operator shall be responsible for ensuring that the MMN is in full compliance with all applicable federal (FCC, FTC, and other agencies), state, and local laws, including the terms and conditions of the grant from Grafton County, used to provide the capital for the MMN.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

The Owner shall evaluate each Proposal it deems complete and responsive to the RFP. As part of the selection process, the Owner may invite Respondents to answer questions regarding their application in person or in writing, participate in an interview, and submit clarifying or supplemental information. In its sole discretion, the Owner may also choose to negotiate with one or more Respondents and then ask the Respondent(s) to submit a best and final offer. The selection criteria are as follows:

- Overall proposal suitability: The proposal must meet the needs included herein and be presented clearly and organized.
- Organizational Experience: Companies will be evaluated on their experience in relation to the scope of this project.
- Customer Pricing Proposal: Companies will be evaluated on the cost of their solution(s) based on the work to be performed per this project's scope.
- Implementation and Maintenance Plan: Companies will be evaluated on their overall plan to utilize and maintain the network in the best interest of County residents.

Proposal Evaluation Categories	Maximum Points	Points Awarded
Overall proposal suitability	30	
Organization Experience	20	
Implementation and Maintenance Plan	40	
Customer Pricing Proposal	10	
Total Points	100	

GENERAL CONDITIONS

- If a Response fails to meet any material terms, conditions, requirements, or procedures, it may be deemed unresponsive and disqualified. The owner reserves the right to waive omissions or irregularities that it determines to be not material.

- This RFP, as may be amended from time to time by the Owner, does not commit the Owner to select any firm(s), award any contracts for services according to this RFP, or pay any costs incurred in responding to this RFP. Owner reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to withdraw the RFP, to engage in preliminary discussions with prospective Respondents, to accept or reject any or all Responses received, to request supplemental or clarifying information, to negotiate with any or all qualified Respondents, and to request modifications to Proposals per negotiations. The owner reserves the unqualified right to waive any informality, deviations, mistakes, and matters of form rather than substance.

- On matters related solely to this RFP that arise before an award decision by the Owner, Respondents shall limit communications with the Owner to the Procurement Team Leader and such other individuals as the Owner may designate from time to time. No other Owner employee, consultant, or representative is permitted to be contacted or authorized to provide any information or respond to any questions or inquiries concerning this RFP. Respondents may contact the Procurement Team Leader for this RFP if it is incomplete.

- The Owner shall treat the Respondent's Proposal as an accurate statement of the Respondent's capabilities and experience. Should any statement asserted by Respondent prove to be inaccurate or inconsistent with the preceding, such inaccuracy or inconsistency shall constitute sufficient cause for Owner, in its sole discretion, to reject the Proposal and/or terminate any resulting Agreement.

- Costs not specifically identified in the Respondent's response and/or not specifically accepted by the Owner as part of the NOA will not be compensated under any contract awarded according to this RFP.

- Subcontractors are required to meet the same requirements and are held to the same reimbursable cost standards as the selected Respondent. Subcontractors and subsidiaries shall be identified in the Proposal.

- Submitted responses must be valid in all respects for a minimum period of one hundred eighty (180) days after the submission deadline.

AGREEMENT FOR EXCHANGE OF PROPRIETARY INFORMATION

- Grantor (is the vendor/contractor) and Grantee (is the governmental entity) hereby agree that if either Party provides confidential or proprietary information to the other Party ("Proprietary Information"), such Proprietary Information shall be held in confidence for a period of three (3) years from the date of receipt, and the receiving Party shall afford such Proprietary Information the same care and protection as it generally affords to its own confidential and proprietary information (which in any case shall be not less than reasonable care) to avoid disclosure to or unauthorized use by any third party to the fullest extent permitted by New Hampshire's Right-to-Know Law (RSA 91-A). All proprietary information, unless otherwise specified in writing, shall remain the property of the disclosing Party and shall be used by the receiving Party only for the intended purpose. Such written Proprietary Information, including all copies thereof, shall be returned to the disclosing Party or destroyed after the receiving Party's need for it has expired or upon the request of the disclosing Party. Proprietary Information shall not be reproduced except to the extent necessary to accomplish the purpose and intent of this Agreement or as otherwise may be permitted in writing by the disclosing Party.
- The foregoing provisions of Section 20.01 shall not apply to any Proprietary Information which (i) becomes publicly available other than through the disclosing Party; (ii) is required to be disclosed by a governmental or judicial law, order, rule or regulation; (iii) is independently developed by the receiving Party; or (iv) becomes available to the receiving Party without restriction from a third party. In the event that the Grantee is required to disclose any Proprietary Information in accordance with a request made pursuant to RSA chapter 91-A, the Grantee shall immediately notify the Grantor of such request and of the potential need to disclose such Proprietary Information. Grantor, thereafter, may initiate suit to enjoin the disclosure of such Proprietary Information.
- Notwithstanding Sections 20.01 and 20.02, either Party may disclose Proprietary Information to its employees, agents, lenders, and funding partners. Legal and financial advisors and providers to the extent necessary or appropriate in connection with the negotiation and/or performance of this Agreement or in obtaining financing, provided that each such Party is notified of the confidential and proprietary nature of such Proprietary Information and is subject to or agrees to be bound by similar restrictions on its use and disclosure.
- Notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained in this Article, the Parties recognize that Grantor and/or Grantee may, within their sole discretion, issue a press release or public announcement relating to the execution of this Agreement. The Parties shall work in good faith regarding the format and content of any such announcement or release prior to its issuance.

- Grantor acknowledges that Grantee is legally obligated, pursuant to New Hampshire's Right-to-Know Law (RSA 91-A), to maintain this Agreement as a governmental record which makes same subject to public disclosure upon request.
- The provisions of this Article shall survive expiration or termination of this Agreement.