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Amazon's \$5B second headquarters will offer 50,000 jobs, and Utah may bid for it

But the state faces big obstacles to attract the huge project.



In this June 18, 2014, file photo, Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos walks on stage for the launch of the new Amazon Fire Phone, in Seattle. Amazon on Thursday announced it was looking for a place to build its second headquarters.

By Tom Harvey – September 7, 2017

They don't have much time, but Utah officials say they will looking at whether Utah might put in a bid to host the huge new headquarters that Amazon announced on Thursday. The Seattle-based company said it is looking to construct a second corporate headquarters in North America

that would be at least 500,000 square feet, hold 50,000 new full-time employees and cost \$5 billion. Proposals are due by Oct. 19.

Val Hale, executive director of the Governor's Office of Economic Development, said the state is "very interested in Amazon's public request for proposal for a second headquarters in North America, and we are eager to evaluate the opportunity."

Amazon, or any company, Hale said in a news release, "would be smart to look at Utah and what we have to offer."

Still, 50,000 employees is a lot for the Wasatch Front metropolitan area where tech companies already are straining to hire enough employees to fill their needs.

Amazon said its location preferences are:

- Metro areas with more than 1 million people.
- A stable and friendly business environment.
- The ability to attract and retain strong technical talent.
- Communities that "think big and creatively" about location options.

The company also set out its ideal site and building requirements:

- Within 30 miles of a major population center.
- Within 45 minutes of an international airport.
- One to two minutes from major highways and arteries.
- Access to mass transit.

Experts say the company's decision is likely to be as much about politics as it is about logistics and incentives, The Washington Post reported. CEO Jeff Bezos, who also owns The Post, has been a vocal opponent of the President Donald Trump administration's immigration bans.

"The fact that Amazon is even considering Canada and Mexico shows how important politics has become in the site-selection process," John Boyd, a Princeton, N.J.-based location consultant, told The Post.

Boyd's shortlist of top contenders include Toronto, where it is easier to hire foreign workers than in the United States; New Jersey; South Florida; northern Virginia; and Atlanta. Amazon recently announced it was building a large warehouse in Salt Lake City to fulfill orders and that it would lease a warehouse in West Valley City. The state offered the company a \$5.6 million tax rebate for the Salt Lake City project.

Last year, the state was involved in a bid to bring a Facebook data center — and 50 to 300 jobs — to West Jordan. That data center was awarded to New Mexico after Utah's potential \$260 million in tax incentives never materialized.