

South Georgia Regional Information Technology Authority (SGRITA) is a regional authority created in '07 by State Legislators specifically to extend broadband internet access to the un-served and underserved within the 1947 square miles of Baker, Calhoun, Early, Miller and Mitchell County in rural S/W Georgia.

SGRITA is seeking [REDACTED] funding for a Last Mile Infrastructure Project to extend minimum 3down/1up Mbps wireless fixed and mobile broadband internet service to un-served and underserved areas of our five Counties plus add short fiber interconnects for the expressed purpose of adding route diversity to resolve current reliability and capacity issues of our predominantly last mile service.

We only lack the funds to purchase broadband access equipment and to complete short fiber interconnection to complete this project. We are poised to leverage \$3,500,000 in State and local funds spent in the past 14 months engineering and building core infrastructure required to support last mile broadband internet service. This project has been contemplated for five years and is truly Shovel Ready given we can be fully completed within 6 to 9 months.

We are located in one of the poorest regions in the United States. The five Counties of SGRITA are all Counties of Persistent Poverty where 26.68% of our people live below the national (13%) poverty level. Our \$32,295 Median Household Income is 36.35% below the national median of \$50,740. All of our service area is defined by RUS as a Rural Area with 97% of our geographic area currently un-served by any broadband access. We seek to improve service to 52,063 residents throughout our five Counties. This includes an estimated [REDACTED] un-served households, [REDACTED] of all households. Plus, there are [REDACTED] non-farm establishments and [REDACTED] Critical Community facilities in our Counties.

Our employees and Board live here. We must provide reliable service at an affordable price and not overstate abilities. That said; we use very conservative assumptions in our engineering and pro-forma. Using these conservative methodologies, we have concluded that there are [REDACTED] households in our proposed service area, plus [REDACTED] non-farm establishments and [REDACTED] anchor institutions, and critical community organizations. We are conservatively projecting [REDACTED] subscribers by Year 10. Over [REDACTED] have already signed up for service though SGRITA without any idea of an exact delivery date or price. These pre-registrants contacted us begging for help without promotion or advertisement on our part and are now in our database awaiting service.

Agriculture is our largest industry and we are one of the most intense agriculture water use regions in the Country. The 1,369 farms in our five Counties have 4,900 irrigation systems using a reported 129.23 million gallons of water/day. The remote monitoring and management of our area water consumption is critical to the ongoing tri-State water discussions between Georgia, Alabama and Florida and was one of the factors for Georgia's initial funding of our project. With this in mind, our network is designed to allow the connection of irrigation systems and field telemetry data at a nominal cost as an integral component to our overall services.

SGRITA has created [REDACTED] jobs in the past year, [REDACTED] of which are dependent on this funding to continue. This project anticipates creating or saving [REDACTED] direct jobs, [REDACTED] full-time-equivalent jobs through sub-contracted operational services and [REDACTED] temporary construction jobs. More

importantly, these are well paying jobs uncommon in our impoverished rural Counties. SGRITA will become the 4th largest employer in Arlington, GA. This project will have a substantial employment impact in our community that will resonate through our local businesses as SGRITA grows.

The proposed network will be free of restrictions on legal content or platforms, on the kinds of equipment that may be attached, and on the modes of communication allowed, provided that certain applications or modes of communication do not unreasonably degrade overall service or cause damage to the network. Interconnection obligations will be met through wholesale service offerings which allow third-party service providers to offer broadband products to consumers in the region.

What makes SGRITA unique is the way the counties have come together to help themselves over the last five years. SGRITA's mission to provide broadband to the un-served and underserved and extends to all areas of the NOFA: schools, businesses, farms, households, public safety, and community facilities. The applications span all critical aspects of a rural community including education and distance learning, emergency medical services, irrigation and conservation controls, and general communications. In a rural area such as this one, broadband can only be sustainable through a concerted effort across all of user bases. Therefore our network is designed to be one solution for all; from farm telemetry and home use to public safety and education.

Our first step was to contract with Georgia Tech www.innovate.gatech.edu to create an Assessment Report and Digital Development Plan for our five Counties. This report helped guide our system design and specifically documented the lack of broadband access in our rural Counties and the compelling opportunities that broadband internet service will mean to our communities. All sectors of our economy and all stakeholders in broadband service were engaged in the process. The needs of our schools, our only college, libraries, healthcare providers, public safety agencies, businesses, farmers and others were addressed. Georgia Tech facilitated community meetings, conducted surveys and applied technical and statistical analysis resulting in a 400 page report.

Using the findings of our Assessment Report and Digital Development Plan, in October 2007 SGRITA received a \$2,700,000 OneGeorgia BRIDGE Grant to build core infrastructure and connect our area schools to broadband service. www.onegeorgia.org/programs/bridge. Starting in May 2008 and within four months, SGRITA completed the construction of a 188 mile licensed wireless broadband backhaul network loop across Baker, Calhoun, Early, Miller, and Mitchell Counties. This consisted of building and implementing carrier grade licensed Radio Frequency (RF) equipment on seventeen (17) towers to support a wireless broadband backbone loop which is transmitting IP data at rates of up to [REDACTED]-Mbps (megabit) with [REDACTED] reliability. Our schools' clocked access speeds have now improved from the bottom 3% in the State to the top 1% in the world. As this was a two phase project, the towers were strategically placed in order to later support wireless rural broadband deployment.

In late 2008 SGRITA issued a public Request for Proposals for rural broadband deployment and received several proposals but after months of deliberation, did not make an award. We lacked the funds to complete the project, the respondents did not have access to frequencies to support

deployment but more importantly, the proposed solutions did not properly address the needs for our region.

We have waited since 2006 for prior RUS borrowers to provide service in our area. Our initial goal was to partner with such a company and provide limited governance. However, we have now developed stronger capabilities and a larger vision for our area than any profit motivated telecommunications company can accomplish. We have brought bandwidth to remote areas of our counties that is more than four times that which previously existed in the second largest city in our region. The standing ovations we receive at the schools we serve, and the difference we are making in our customers' lives is worth much more than the money we charge. Every dollar spent with SGRITA is reinvested in our local area to make our rural communities economically competitive in the 21st century.

During this time we trialed licensed and unlicensed frequencies including 2.5 GHz, 3.65 GHz, 5 GHz and others to find the best solution for our communities. Because of the large area, high rainfall and dense foliage; SGRITA made an informed decision and purchased 700 MHz Lower Band (Block B) License-WQIZ589, in Cellular Market Area 383. This exclusive license covers nine continuous Counties in the Southwest Georgia (including all of our Counties). We also have on file with the FCC a long term lease for 2.5GHz EBS frequency under call sign WNC355 which covers roughly [REDACTED] of our area.

Going with 700 MHz has led us to adopt an LTE strategy. SGRITA is deploying a mobile and fixed broadband wireless solution using TD-CDMA platform that is fully upgradable to LTE standard, allowing mobile transition between 2.5GHz and 700MHz cells. This is proven technology manufactured by [REDACTED].

SGRITA is deploying this month broadband internet service using 2.5GHz to previously unserved clients in a very limited area. We have installed 700MHz equipment on one of our towers and will commercially deploy this tower by October 2009. [REDACTED].

Over five years of careful planning and preparation has been completed. Nearly \$3,500,000 in local and State funds have been invested preparing for last mile broadband deployment. Management and operations are in place. Our current vendors and contractors are ready to work. Our people are starving for connectivity. With additional funding, SGRITA will deliver within nine months a completed project to bring true broadband service to a significantly large unserved and underserved area in one of the United States' poorest regions.