

Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe

Project Title: Leech Lake WAN Project

Project Type: Middle Mile

Executive Summary

The home of the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe is the Leech Lake Reservation. 4,079 band members live in and around 16 villages spread across the 1,100 square miles of beautiful, but rugged, forests and lakes. An additional 1,431 Chippewa Tribe members live within the reservation boundaries. The reservation is primarily in Cass County, but includes land in Itasca, Beltrami and Hubbard Counties. The reservation is also located within the Chippewa National Forest managed by the US Forest Service. The Leech Lake tribal government is a sovereign nation and operates a full set of government services. This includes public safety, health care, courts, public works, human services, economic development, natural resources, information technology and other divisions. Operating this government requires collaboration with federal, state, county and city governments, as well as coordination with the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe, of which the Leech Lake Band is one of seven bands. The tribal government is the largest employer in Cass County with 2,132 employees; 1,263 work in the three casinos operated by the band. The demographics of the reservation are challenging, characterized by high levels of poverty, low education levels and high unemployment. The median age of the native population is 22 years old. Using 2005 Bureau of Indian Affairs data, unemployment from 2003 – 2005 remained consistent at 26%. Of those employed, 70% live with incomes below the poverty line. With the economic downturn, especially with the area's reliance on natural resources and tourism, it is estimated that up to 55% of the population may now be unemployed. The project will consist of a build of 115 miles of fiber optic cable and 9 WiMax towers. This network will allow for the provisioning of high-speed connections to each community within the reservation. The fiber optic network will carry 1 Gig and 100 Mbps connections while the wireless backhaul network will allow for 73 Mbps back to the fiber optic core. The capital cost of the entire network will be 8.1 million dollars. During construction, the network build will create approximately 25 jobs, with 18 of those jobs held by tribal members. They will be employees of the Public Works department which will be responsible for the construction of the fiber optic network. The training and experience gained will provide the opportunity to sub-contract fiber placement across the region for other carriers to make these full-time, well-paying jobs. To operate the ongoing network, five full-time positions will be created. We are confident in the applicant's ability to build and operate this network for two reasons: 1) The Tribal MIS department has successfully operated their existing WiMax network and complex legacy Local Area Networks and 2) The band can rely on the broad expertise of the vendors and consultant team that will surround the build and operational start-up of the network. The network will serve over 50 tribal buildings and community centers across the reservation. In addition, Public Safety and other departments will utilize the WiMax network for connectivity across the reservation. We believe that by the time the build is complete, over 275 WiMax

connections will be used to better deliver tribal services to its constituents. The tribe will also actively pursue a private partner to provide an affordable wireless internet service bringing the reality of internet access across the reservation. In addition to the services that will serve the needs of the tribe the network will also be opened to the public and private sector to provision new broadband services across it. Dark fiber, wholesale fiber optic and wireless transport, and tower co-location services will be provided with terms and conditions readily available and affordable. The network will also meet all of the interconnection and use conditions set forth by the NOFA. The budget for this project is \$8,297,740.