

## **StimUSAt: National Rural Broadband Gapfiller Program**

EasyGrants ID: 475

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### **C. Executive Summary**

#### **Executive Summary of Project for BIP and BTOP:**

##### **8. Infrastructure Projects Executive Summary**

Providing affordable broadband to rural America is a challenge due to the sheer expanse of our nation. While BIP/BTOP wireline and terrestrial wireless projects will improve access, inevitably some will remain underserved due to the vastness of the geography involved.

A satellite network dedicated to rural broadband will fill the gaps after BIP/BTOP implementation and will directly support wireline and terrestrial wireless with middle mile service. There is value in starting now; given the time to build and launch a rural broadband satellite and the flexibility to offer service anywhere in the lower 48, this ensures “gapfiller” access as soon as possible after the last round of funding.

It is not enough to simply place a satellite in the sky—if so, BIP/BTOP would not be needed. [REDACTED]

AtContact Communications, LLC was founded SPECIFICALLY to deliver broadband to rural and underserved users. Since 1997, AtContact has delivered satellite broadband to remote and underserved areas of the US and overseas. [REDACTED]

The proposed “StimUSAt” GSO satellite program will provide reliable and affordable rural broadband to nearly all the contiguous US beginning in 2012, with a “Quickstart” in 2010 providing early service to community anchors. The project is committed to providing service only to qualifying rural census blocks not covered by other successful BIP/BTOP applicants, with a focus on community anchors and rural healthcare. StimUSAt maximizes taxpayer value with a 100% loan application.

StimUSAt provides an open, non-proprietary “fiber in the sky” to deliver broadband to rural residents that lack access and provide them a choice of last mile providers through wholesaling and non-exclusive distribution arrangements.

The project maximizes US content, creating thousands of jobs not only in satellite construction, but [REDACTED] with thousands of distributors, installers, and maintenance staff based in rural service areas. [REDACTED]

With a StimUSAt loan, RUS will deploy a dedicated satellite to serve those left behind in rural America, with a single-minded business focus on rural communities and institutions, and with an open, non-proprietary set of incentives that ensures the best use of taxpayer resources.

a. Opportunity

While BIP/BTOP funding will go a long way towards delivering rural broadband, it cannot fund service to every underserved census block through wireline and terrestrial wireless alone. Many rural or remote areas will never receive broadband from any provider other than satellite. Providing broadband via satellite to nearly all the lower 48 states is a highly efficient way to fill the gaps remaining after BIP/BTOP program funding.

b. Service areas

This project can provide broadband access to every rural unserved and underserved census block in nearly all the lower 48. It will only deploy equipment to census blocks which do not have new options after allocation of BIP/BTOP funding. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] in the 47 states we will serve, qualifying service areas before BIP/BTOP funding is allocated encompass over 4.5M households and 675,000 businesses.

c. Households / businesses passed

A majority of census blocks identified above will be served by other BIP/BTOP projects. While the StimUSAt gap filler project will pass all 4.5M underserved households in its coverage area, it has the capacity to connect up to 384,000 households, businesses and institutions. The application is conditioned so it will only hook up in areas not served by other BIP/BTOP-funded providers.

d. Community anchors

StimUSAt expects to link ~5,000 community anchors, public safety entities, and critical community organizations not served by other BIP/BTOP-funded providers. We will especially work with rural healthcare facilities to ensure they can send and receive the records they need to deliver the highest quality of healthcare at the lowest cost.

StimUSAt will also be working closely with schools throughout the coverage area. There are 13,280 schools that fall into the “low technology index” published by [REDACTED]. In just our sample states, OH has 530, MN has 193 and TN has 316 schools on this list.

e. Services

AtContact will offer several service levels, providing a choice of last mile providers and supporting all the applications normally used. The open network platform is scalable because it can provide broadband service of 1.5Mbps x 512kbps for a single user as well as support Emergency Services, community anchor institutions, Local and State Government, fixed and mobile broadband networks

for Telco's providing voice and broadband solutions to their customers at rates >100 Mbps. AtContact will provide these benefits to all last mile providers on attractive terms. A "Quickstart" program using existing satellite capacity will offer service to community anchors in 2010.

f. Non-discrimination and interconnection

AtContact commits to all principles in the FCC's Internet Policy Statement including their application to interconnection with the public Internet and physical interconnection for the exchange of traffic. We will negotiate in good faith with all parties. We will not discriminate against subscribers using third-party devices or applications. We will rely on technically neutral standards as set by the Internet Engineering Task Force. Network management will assess service levels on a per-customer basis in the administration of service-level agreements. No discrimination will be permitted with regard to the use of applications or access of end points on the network, nor will any service provider be permitted to block competitive applications such as file sharing software or services. Except for discounts to certain community anchor institutions, all service offerings will be offered to everyone on the same terms and conditions. All policies will be published on our website and updated regularly, along with contact information and prompt response time.

g. Type of system

The StimUSAt system will be based on best of breed open architecture that enables the most efficient use of bandwidth. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The system supports improvements to broadband tool sets and technology platforms. The full access network provides a high-speed connection via a GSO Ka-Band satellite. The network equipment can connect at speeds in excess of 100 MB/sec through a satellite dish and a modem. The infrastructure costs to maintain this satellite system are reasonable compared to terrestrial networks.

h. Qualifications

AtContact was founded in 1997 to create a satellite network and teleport for servicing rural and underserved areas, including public safety in remote and underserved areas of the globe. The team has 150 years of combined satellite and network design, engineering, management, federal regulatory and operations experience. Among the team are people who have started major satellite companies, such as EchoStar and WildBlue, and others who have spent their working lives providing satellite services to Alaska and other rural areas. AtContact currently provides comprehensive data services using fiber, microwave and satellite technologies from its secure satellite earth station in Colorado. AtContact provides affordable VSAT IP services to rural locations, including remote cities and towns in Alaska through its Alaska Internet Hub.

i. Overall cost

The total project cost is \$299.3MM. This includes design, construction, launch, deployment, and the Quickstart phase. It also includes gateway and ground equipment and all required software. A loan of \$286.4MM is requested, with additional debt of \$12.9MM to be provided by AtContact.

j. Subscriber projections

AtContact conservatively estimates its middle mile service will result in service to 245,000 underserved households across the lower 48 states. It estimates that it will provide higher speed service to 5,000 businesses and 5,000 community anchor institutions, plus 400 in the Quickstart phase.

k. Number of jobs

The project will create over 4,000 jobs. The requirement for field technicians to service user equipment will create hundreds of rural jobs. Trainers will be required to assist community institutions. Satellite design, construction and launch will create jobs that would not otherwise have existed without funding. These are skilled positions in the currently slack aerospace industry. Most importantly, access will create a new cadre of Internet-based jobs fostered by entrepreneurship programs and business incubators. As broadband impacts accrue, new opportunities among all levels of business will flourish. These new positions are permanent and will grow in number.