Abbreviations

Applicant Name: Anniston Fiber Optics, Inc.

Project Title: Project BEAR

Project Type: Last Mile Non-Remote

Executive Summary

Anniston Fiber Optics, Inc. is a non-profit 501c3 organization founded in 2007 to provide educational technology improvement for at risk students by providing broadband access via fiber optic facilities, in the east Alabama region. Grant awards through the Appalachian Regional Commission, the State of Alabama Department of Education and private funding from Stewart Family Foundation, increased the original vision. This twenty six mile network includes all six of the Anniston City Schools, three county schools, Gadsden State Community College, Coosa Valley Juvenile Services complex, Calhoun County Sheriff Department and the Calhoun County Courthouse. Anniston Fiber Optics, through collaborative efforts with community organizations, understands the need for modernizing infrastructure as a necessary part of the foundation for long term economic stability and prosperity. Therefore we respectfully submit the following broadband infrastructure program we have titled “Project BEAR” (Broadband for East Alabama Region) to expand the network as a composite of fiber optic facilities and wireless base stations. This project’s efforts will ensure that the greatest broadband speed is provided to the greatest population of users at affordable rates, as set forth in the Recovery Act. The broadband infrastructure for Project BEAR is multi-county and identifiable in three service areas. Each census block identified for coverage in Talladega and Calhoun County will be covered at 100% with the composite network. The areas served by this project contain a minimum of 11,648 households, 150 businesses and 35 strategic institutions. In alignment with the Recovery Act, Project BEAR will connect three hospitals with managed broadband services for health information technology to improve the quality and coordination of health care in east Alabama. Rural clinics will receive access via the wireless infrastructure to improve coordination of healthcare information and promote electronic exchange of patient information in these underserved areas. An additional healthcare emphasis utilizing the wireless base stations is East Alabama Emergency Management Services with their ‘Cardiac Connections’ sustainable grant request program. This program will allow for the submission of critical cardiac information directly to the hospital Emergency Center. Each of these healthcare programs will be supported through the Project BEAR infrastructure project and managed broadband connections. Three libraries, one located in a high-risk community, will increase current capacity to 100Mbps enhancing the opportunities for community awareness and training as well as after-school programs. Each library facility has additional goals for this broadband enhancement. These goals will be addressed in supporting sustainable grant applications linked to Project BEAR. Project BEAR will help supply comprehensive, modernized technology to several educational institutions, thus providing teachers, parents and students with resources needed to support academic achievement and growth. One example of the innovative educational opportunities will be provided through the infrastructure
connection to the Anniston Museum of Natural History and the Berman Museum. Through collaborative efforts, vulnerable populations will have access to extended learning options during classroom time. This will include, without limit to, after school and childcare programs. Project BEAR’s focus on educational technology services will help to ensure long-term success by training the next generation of innovators and problem-solvers. The infrastructure will deliver broadband to six community centers throughout the city of Anniston, increasing the quality of after-school and homework programs for students and parents in vulnerable, low income areas. Computer centers will be established at each of these locations, one of which is a high risk youth center, through the City of Anniston’s proposal within Project BEAR. Current law enforcement programs in the service areas have limited investigative and reporting systems for personnel. Incorporating wireless base stations as identified in this Infrastructure program will allow access to broadband in rural areas for city and county law enforcement and other emergency responders. The fiber infrastructure will connect educational institutions such as the Success Academy and Jacksonville State University (JSU) into the local network. JSU’s connection will expand the potential for organizations such as Coosa Valley Juvenile Youth Services and all county and city schools on the current to have network access to the resources of the university and the current connection to Gadsden State Community College. JSU’s connection will also facilitate the establishment of a regional hub for the statewide ACCESS network, reducing access costs and allowing additional schools to connect at higher speeds. Anniston Fiber Optics, offers broadband connectivity to educational facilities at fifty (50%) percent below the market rate for our area. Anchor institutions receive, at a minimum, a thirty (30%) percent discount. Anchor institutions providing a 'needs' demonstration for programs that target the objectives as defined by the RUS/NTIA NOFA and Anniston Fiber Optics philanthropic goals, may apply for additional discounts, up to 100% of the cost. A collaborative effort with the Anniston Water Works and Sewer Board will allow Project BEAR access to all water works sites for wireless base stations on high elevations as well as fiber hub locations. A broadband system will allow Anniston Water Works to adhere to regulations for water and wastewater efficiencies. The wireless system and water works system will be monitored through a Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system. This system will add additional security and management of water and sewer, especially during times of emergency or disaster. Anniston Fiber Optics is committed to following Nondiscrimination and Interconnection Obligations as defined by the Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) and the principles contained in the FCC’s Internet Policy Statement (FCC 01-151). Information contained herein will be included in network and operations on the company website. Network architecture includes a telecommunications hub facility for interconnecting with other service providers at reasonable rates. Network best practices will be utilized for the protection of the network. The broadband infrastructure system for Project BEAR will be a composite of fiber optic facilities, adding an additional fifty-two (52) miles of Corning SMF28 fiber with OC48 optronics to the network and fifteen (15) Alvarion WiMax base stations. These stations will be strategically positioned to provide broadband access to rural areas currently unserved and underserved in Calhoun and Talladega counties. These stations will reach pockets of residents in low-income areas, as well as residents isolated by current and former military facilities, large tracts of national forest and rugged terrain. Anniston Fiber Optics, through an existing operations agreement with M2 Connections will implement, manage and operate the broadband infrastructure network through qualified telecommunications personnel. Senior management of M2 Connections has extensive experience building, managing and operating telecommunications companies
that encompass CLEC, cellular and PCS networks, as well as, ISP offerings and state of the art data centers throughout the southeastern United States. The overall cost to implement this project is $6,444,170 at an average cost of $495.81 per household passed on the composite network. Utilizing data from the project budget, beginning in year two on all installations, the expected subscriber projection would include 15% of the residential market or 1,055 subscribers with an increase to 1,871 subscribers by year five. Business projections include 3% of the market share with 4 subscribers estimating an increase to 12 subscribers at year five. Critical Institution projections include 29% of the market share with 10 broadband connections estimating an increase to 14 for critical institutions at year five. Utilizing the formula consistent with the CEA (Council of Economic Advisors) guidelines, Project BEAR will be creating or saving an estimated 70 jobs through the infrastructure project for the east Alabama region. In meeting the goals of the Recovery Act, Project BEAR will not only promote short-term stimulus by improving the quality of education and modernizing health care through a high quality infrastructure, but will also lay the foundation for a robust and sustainable 21st century economy in the eastern region of Alabama.