Executive Summary

a) Opportunity the proposed system seeks to address. The purpose of the project is to provide voice and data transmission on a broader and faster basis to seven economically challenged Alabama counties and the critical community facilities and anchor institutions located therein. Installation of 31 additional cell towers would benefit underserved vulnerable rural populations by resulting improvement in delivery of healthcare, public safety, local government and educational services. b) A general description of the proposed funded service areas (location, number of communities, etc.) The immediate proposed funded service areas are 31 rings 3.0 miles in diameter located in seven economically challenged rural and underserved counties in South Alabama. The counties in which the rings would be located are: Perry, Dallas, Marengo, Wilcox, Butler, Covington, and Coffee. Within the 28.3 sq. miles encompassed within each ring’s 3.0 mile radius the average population is 491 residing in 196 households with a range of lowest population of 4 to greatest population of 2794 and a range of lowest number of households of 2 and greatest number of households of 1077. The number of businesses located within the average ring service area is 7 with a range of lowest number of businesses of 0 to greatest number of businesses of 55. Please see the responses to questions 12 and 14 for demographic and economic detail regarding each of the 31 rings. The benefits of the project are also accurately understood in the context of the demographics and economics of the individual county and regional populations they would serve. Vulnerable rural populations in seven underserved counties in Alabama would benefit from the resulting improvement in delivery of healthcare, public safety, educational and local government services. The total population of the region is 196,593 with an average population density of 32.7. The counties within the service area are among the most economically challenged in Alabama: median household income ranges from $16,646 (Wilcox) to $33,664 (Coffee); families below the poverty level range from 36.1% (Wilcox) to 11.3% (Coffee); and individuals below the poverty level range from 39.9% (Wilcox) to 14.7% (Coffee). Thus, the average percentage of families below the poverty level in the region (23.1%) is 251% greater than the national average (9.2%) and the average percentage of individuals below the poverty level in the region (27.1%) is 218% greater than the national average (12.4%). c) Number of households and businesses passed. The number of households and businesses located within the service area of each of the 31 rings and their location by census block(s) are detailed in the response to questions 12 and 14 respectively. In aggregate, 6067 households and 224 businesses are located within the rings. d) Number of community anchor institutions, public safety entities, and critical community organizations passed and/or involved with project (e.g., health care, education, libraries, etc.). The number of community anchor institutions, public safety entities, and critical community organizations passed and/or involved with the project are as follow by county (according to the website HomeTownLocator):
Perry County: 27 Dallas County: 96 Marengo County: 49 Wilcox County: 35 Butler County: 29 Covington County: 57 Coffee County: 38 TOTAL: 331
e) Proposed services and applications for the proposed funded service areas and users. Provide voice and data transmission on a broader and faster basis to seven economically challenged Alabama counties and the critical community facilities and anchor institutions located therein. Installation of 31 additional cell towers would benefit underserved vulnerable rural populations by resulting improvement in delivery of healthcare, public safety, local government and educational services. f) Approach to addressing the non-discrimination and interconnection obligations. CIG's proposed Alabama tower network will offer an open and technologically neutral telecommunications network for all “for profit” and “not for profit” broadband providers to use to offer service to unserved and underserved rural areas. This system meets all interconnection, non-discrimination, and network management practice obligations established by the Notice of Funds Availability (NOFA) and the supporting Grant Guidelines for the BIP and BTOP programs. CIG proposes multi-tenant towers through which consumers can access lawful internet content through their choice of providers in compliance with the guidelines of the FCC’s Internet Principles. These towers will be capable of maximizing the number of carriers per tower, though still complying with all structural and zoning requirements. By proposing multi-tenant towers, CIG provides competition among network providers and servicers and gives the end user a variety of internet applications and devices to choose from. By offering an agnostic shared platform, CIG would reduce the cost for all competitors to deploy their services. g) Type of broadband system that will be deployed (network type and technology standard). Enhanced breadth and speed of existing area broadband systems would be facilitated by the erection of thirty one cell towers in seven counties. h) Qualifications of the applicant that demonstrate the ability to implement and operate a broadband infrastructure, and/or be a sustainable broadband services provider. The proposed project would be realized through the financial and technical collaboration of Communications Infrastructure Group LLC (CIG) and WFI. CIG is an Atlanta-based developer of multi-provider communications infrastructure focused on telecommunications tower design, construction, acquisition and management throughout the Southeast. WFI is a broadly experienced network infrastructure design, deployment, program management, quality assurance and maintenance service provider. WFI has engineered and successfully, rapidly and cost-effectively developed more than $2 billion in telecom infrastructure since 1994. i) Overall infrastructure cost of the broadband system: $5,353,707
j) The FCC reports average national wireless subscription rates of 86%. The population segment with access to high speed broadband is only 22% of that 86%. This project brings high speed broadband to rural locations across AL currently are not offered broadband coverage. k) Number of jobs estimated to be created or saved as result of this project. Number of jobs to be created or saved: We estimate each tower will create or sustain at least 50 jobs per year in each of the two years of the projects’ first two phases. The project will directly stimulate economic growth and job creation by: 1) Directly creating demand for the manufacture of 35 towers and the equipment associated with their operation; 2) Directly creating demand for the installation of 31 towers, which includes the transport and installation of the towers and components, clearing the land and providing access and utilities to the site and 3) Directly creating demand for ongoing expansion (adding service providers) and ongoing tower maintenance. Further, this will create professional service jobs in real estate, A&E, environmental services.