Siskiyou County, geographically the fifth largest county in the state of California covers more than 6,347 square miles is located in the northernmost section of California with a population of approximately 44,301 people. The county includes nine incorporated cities including Dorris, Dunsmuir, Etna, Ft. Jones, Montague, Mt Shasta, Tulelake, Weed and Yreka, plus another 10 unincorporated population centers as well as various ranches, camps and businesses. The county has 32 local k-12 schools and local education agencies which serve some 6,200 students, as well as local community college. The county also contains 96 institutions that support local, state and federal emergency and support services.

Siskiyou County’s unemployment rate is consistently nearly double that of the state average; in December of 2007 the state unemployment rate was 5.9% while Siskiyou County struggled at 10.5%. Currently Siskiyou County has an unemployment rate of 18.10%. According to census data 18.6% of residents are below poverty level and an average of 51% have income below the median income level for the area and thus qualify as part of the targeted income group for federal grant programs such as HUD.

Rural broadband is a significant issue in Siskiyou County because it is cost prohibitive for many residents as evidenced by our extremely high rates for service (See LAST MILE PROJECT APPLICATION) and our extreme poverty and unemployment rates mentioned above.

We believe that we will increase the adoption and use of broadband by providing access to public computing centers in all twelve of our existing public libraries. Currently the 12 public libraries offer limited availability. For example in the City of Etna (pop. 745) the library is open two days a week from 1-4pm. These restricted hours severely limit the availability of the general public to access the public computers located in them. We propose through the use of ARRA funding to open the libraries for the purpose of access to public computing at least 4 hours each week day and one weekend day. The County of Siskiyou will provide matching funds and has committed to not cut the library budget to contribute to and increase the availability of public computers and broadband access.

Yreka is the County seat and home to more than 7700 individuals with a daily influx of approximately 3,500 individuals who work, play, shop, obtain medical and social services, and visit governmental offices, courts, probation departments and conduct personal business. This influx of people far exceeds the public library capacity to meet the public computing needs. Free WI-FI in each of the three parks in
Yreka would allow not only the residents but also the daily transient influx of local citizens access to broadband connectivity 24 hours a day.

There are no restrictions to the use of the public computing centers. The public libraries are open and available to all citizens. The Wi-Fi access to broadband in the park is available to all members of the public 24 hours a day with no limitations or restrictions.

Rural Broadband is an issue that affects all the communities in Siskiyou County. Each city has supported the Siskiyou County Economic Development Council (SCEDC) in pursuing this critical infrastructure opportunity. The SCEDC has formed a coalition of local ISP/WISP providers, k-128 Education, Community College, healthcare, Karuk Tribal Council, business leaders, backbone service providers and public elected officials. The SCEDC has assessed the requirements and the opportunity, and has created the Siskiyou County Broadband Consortium (SCBC), a collaborative team of public and private leadership to bring broadband to rural remote Siskiyou County.

The SCBC was established to address the lack of convenient, affordable broadband connectivity throughout the county. Currently, there is limited last mile infrastructure for broadband, and even where broadband technology exists, it is available only to a very small service area. The broadband services in these areas are primarily DSL based technology which is limited by the distance it must travel from the Telco Central Office (CO) to the customers address. This leaves large sections of the County without access to the DSL service. The majority of the region is served by terrestrial copper communications lines. The copper line systems are unable to provide widespread deployment of broadband solutions to the region.

All of the current solutions that are available in the limited areas of the county average more than double the monthly recurring costs of broadband in metropolitan areas in the state. This collaborative LAST MILE project will expand coverage areas to end users as part of the collaborative middle mile, last mile and community computing applications.

This Consortium is pleased to submit a collaborative application that offers a delivery model that will be easily replicated not only throughout California, but in rural communities throughout the United States. More importantly, this model provides a sustainable method for delivery of broadband services to any underserved area within the state. In recent months, the county has been unable to attract new businesses and jobs to the area because of the lack of communications infrastructure that would enable a business to be competitive in today’s economy. This project will enable cost effective services for businesses and consumers resulting in positive job growth and population retention. Siskiyou County has a total of 21,947 households and 2,452 businesses. The Community Computing center project places a community computing center in twelve different communities spread throughout the County.