Oklahoma Community Access Network (OCAN) Executive Summary

The Oklahoma Community Access Network (OCAN) proposal presents an unprecedented opportunity for Oklahoma to meet the demands of life in the 21st century. Easy and reliable access to technology for Oklahomans to travel along the information highway is as essential in today's world as the construction of rail was to Oklahoma's settlement. Oklahoma is still a young state of nearly 103 years. Its very name is reflective of its Indian heritage as Oklahoma is a Choctaw word meaning Red People. Oklahoma is the 20th largest state in the nation with a population of just over 3.5 million people. Sixty percent of the population resides in the two metropolitan areas of Tulsa and Oklahoma City. The remaining forty percent are spread across the state in communities ranging in size from a few hundred people to 25,000. Rich in native culture, Oklahoma was originally created as Indian Territory by the federal government where tribal nations from across the country were forced to relocate in the 1800's. Their resilience and perseverance have resulted in a tapestry of languages and cultures represented by 38 federally recognized and sovereign tribes. The history and development of Oklahoma reflects the spirit of its people from American Indians to Sooners who jumped the land run to freed slaves who formed all black communities. Theirs were tales of 'fortitude and fearlessness, of innovation and ingenuity, of family and unflagging faith in light of hardships' in the words of Governor Brad Henry. The Dust Bowl image of Oklahoma is a distant memory. Biotech startups and nanotechnology are revolutionizing how Oklahoma views itself and the world beyond. Medical breakthroughs spurred by Oklahoma research institutions are changing the face of medicine and saving lives. Information technology, aviation and aerospace are accelerating change while renewable energy create potential for new jobs in rural Oklahoma. These new industries and others have joined Oklahoma's great economic drivers of oil, natural gas and agriculture. The action plan for Oklahoma's future is focused squarely on today's knowledge-based economy requiring highly educated, technology proficient Oklahomans who can access and use investments in technology infrastructure to their benefit. A state with inadequate broadband capacity means its citizens are at a disadvantage. Economic development, educational, public health and safety services depend upon the ability to communicate. With Oklahoma's significant rural base across a geographically large area, access to broadband is the key to growth and prosperity. Creating access to basic services through technology means Oklahomans in the most remote areas of the state can be in contact with public service providers, can access distant learning and health care services and can communicate with their government and one another more readily. OCAN's proposal seeks to build 1,005 miles of new middle-mile fiber infrastructure to connect 32 anchor institutions in underserved and unserved areas of the state where a broadband penetration rate barely reaches 25% in some cases. The fiber route selected
touches 35 of Oklahoma's 77 counties, approximately 89% of the state's population, and is on state highway right-of-way. Within five miles of the proposed fiber build are 1,096 schools, libraries, medical or health care providers, public safety entities, community colleges, institutions of higher education, along with other community support organizations and government facilities. OCAN's middle-mile infrastructure will support a variety of last-mile projects of particular interest to private sector providers who along with local, state and tribal entities have voiced their support for the project's goals. OCAN's impact, as additional fiber connections are constructed, will mean unprecedented access to essential services for rural Oklahomans. A number of state agencies own, manage and maintain telecommunications infrastructures, both wireless and wireline to include the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, Office of State Finance, Oklahoma Department of Transportation, and the Oklahoma Turnpike Authority who have worked for over a year to provide a foundation for OCAN'S application. OCAN's grant request is $73,998,268 with a proposed cash and in-kind match of 33.2%. OCAN's proposal will leverage existing state assets with federal funding to address the great disparity in broadband access between urban and rural areas of Oklahoma. OCAN principals have more than thirty decades of experience developing and sustaining public/private partnerships with broadband and telecommunications providers. It is the goal of the OCAN proposal to expand its partnerships with the commercial provider community to provide broadband to all areas of the state in the most cost-effective and efficient manner possible. In addition to the private providers mentioned specifically in the application, other partnerships are being pursued and will continue following the submission of this application. It is anticipated that 863 jobs will be created as a result of this project. Oklahoma remains largely a rural state throughout most of its seventy-seven counties where access to broadband is limited. The OCAN application will create unprecedented opportunities to expand education, health, and public safety services, create new partnerships among local, state and tribal governments and the private sector, foster job growth and development, and be a catalyst for Oklahoma's continued competitiveness in a knowledge based economy.