Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: NORTHERN NECK PLANNING DIST COMMISION

Project Title: Northern Neck Regional Broadband Network

Project Type: Comprehensive Community Infrastructure

_______________________ Executive Summary _______________________

The stated goal of the ARRA is to disperse funding to worthy projects for stimulating job growth and delivering bandwidth deep into the rural areas of the country; the NNPDC (Northern Neck Planning District Commission) believes their project warrants full consideration. The NNPDC submission is comprised of four Virginia Counties that seek federal funding under the ARRA. A Broadband Authority will own the infrastructure as a completely open access network where operations and services to the end users are provided by others. The estimated overall cost of the infrastructure is $7,169,804. The project would consist of one Middle Mile service area comprising parts of four counties' Lancaster, Northumberland, Richmond and Westmoreland in the eastern part of Virginia. This project will deploy Middle Mile broadband infrastructure in economically distressed areas. Westmoreland and Richmond counties are designated as Economically Distressed suffering both high unemployment and per capita income at 80% or less than the national rate. The Northern Neck region's unemployment rate is significantly higher that the State rate of 7.6% (latest available figures) with Westmoreland and Richmond at 9.4%, Northumberland at 12.4% and Lancaster at 13%. The entire region has suffered during the current recession. With funding from the Department of Commerce (NTIA) under the BTOP program, the NNPDC will have the opportunity to provide a broadband middle mile solution combining wireline and wireless technology serving this area of eastern Virginia. The network will consist of a middle mile fiber core network consisting of 83 miles of new fiber interconnecting with approximately 104 miles of existing fiber owned by private providers. The area served consists of approximately 9577 residences and 476 businesses. By using existing fiber through agreements the overall deployment costs of serving the area will be significantly reduced. Wireless towers will be built to provide additional broadband coverage and that data will be backhauled on the fiber network to aggregation points and then to long haul data transport. The NNPDC has been engaged in planning this project for over three years. The four county members have formalized an intergovernmental partnership, the Northern Neck Broadband Authority, an entity authorized under Virginia Law to deploy communications infrastructure. The project will be a public private partnership including government, non-government and for-profit entities. Three private broadband providers support this application for funding and intend to utilize the middle mile infrastructure to deploy highspeed services to additional areas. The whole business and government community within the NNPDC has been actively supportive as is evidenced by the huge number of support letters received. Businesses large and small; political and educational leadership; public safety leadership; and health care providers are all hopeful this project will deliver much needed services to their operations. As part of this project Middle Mile infrastructure will be deployed to the Rappahannock Community College located in Warsaw, VA (Richmond County). The project will deploy to
sheriff, police and fire departments along the fiber route. Many of the fire departments do not currently have internet service. In total, the fiber project would connect to 96 community anchor institutions including in addition to public safety, K-12 and higher education, healthcare and other key community support organization. The project will include a Last Mile infrastructure component in unserved or underserved areas. These will be provided by three private providers (MetroCast, Northern Neck Wireless and Digital Bridge Communications) who have all stated their intent to utilize the proposed broadband fiber and towers to deploy highspeed last mile services. They will provide a range of last mile services including wireless (Northern Neck Wireless and Digital Bridge Communications) and wireline (cable and Internet over fiber connections-Metrocast). Based on their initial projects approximately 875 wireless and 300 wired customers would be served. Additional providers will be incorporated on a non-discriminatory open access basis to the network infrastructure owned by the Broadband Authority. This will be accomplished formally through the governance policy and operationally by utilizing a separate network interconnecting to private providers at a network operations center to be located in Warsaw. The network will utilize a high capacity fiber infrastructure utilizing both point to point and passive optical network components. The infrastructure is capable of providing hundreds of megabits per second to any user. Finally, the applicant has proposed to contribute a 30 percent cash match to the Federal funding requested for this project. Seventy-eight (78) jobs will be created by this project (31 direct, 19 indirect and 28 induced). The NNPDC hopes that the NTIA will look favorably on this grant submission and assist the development of broadband throughout the area.