In 2002, 16 Utah municipalities frustrated by the inability (or unwillingness) for local incumbent telecom providers to establish adequate connectivity to their institutions of learning, economic development, and to their citizenry as a whole moved forward with a major broadband initiative. They began to establish open-access, active-Ethernet, fiber-to-the-premise broadband infrastructure as a state interlocal agency: the Utah Telecommunications Open Infrastructure Agency (UTOPIA). From its inception, the comprehensive project planned to provide a ubiquitous build to every citizen, first responder, library, school, college, public safety entity, and anchor institution in the respective municipalities. At its core, that's precisely what UTOPIA is: the answer to the cumulative need of the 500,000 residents in these Utah cities. However, UTOPIA's progress has been impeded and all but halted. The residents of these communities have been unable to get the broadband services for which the network was formed. Eight of these 15 cities, representing a population of about 375,000, are requesting BTOP funding to further deploy the network into sections of their communities. As national economies have suffered, the cities of UTOPIA have felt the severe effects of that storm. The network's funding capabilities (and therefore deployment) have been critically restricted. If awarded, the BTOP grant will produce nearly 220 new jobs across the board, host myriad economic development projects, and complete an additional 20% of the needed network infrastructure. UTOPIA’s total grant request for just over $16.2 million dollars goes entirely towards middle mile infrastructure and connectivity. UTOPIA, however, maintains a unique advantage through its recently proven, groundbreaking, last-mile, sustainable broadband deployment methodology and practices. The requested middle mile infrastructure will directly, yet independently, support UTOPIA’s unique last mile infrastructure model, a program based on pre-sales. Each of UTOPIA’s municipal regions are segmented into broadband footprints, engineered to accommodate, on average, 800 subs per footprint. UTOPIA deploys fiber-to-the-premise in a last mile scenario only as predetermined take rates are realized in both residential and business sectors in these footprints. By establishing market demand upfront and requiring participants to share in the financial burden of construction, UTOPIA deployments attain the highest level of sustainability. Even though deployments require consumer buy-in, recent 'first-time through' takes rates in UTOPIA footprints have been as high as 30 to 40%. Such unprecedented takes rates document significantly underserved community needs. Clearly, UTOPIA is not requesting BTOP funding for last mile infrastructure; however, a successful grant would result in last mile deployment to thousands of citizens and businesses. UTOPIA’s sustainable fiber deployment is more than mere speculation or forecasting. Rather, it is based on sustainable last mile models that have been proven by UTOPIA's team of engineers; operations, outside plant and marketing professionals; and management team. They have a
vast body of experience, knowledge, and capability that support UTOPIA's public/private partnership, wholesale/retail-split, fiber-to-the-premises model. UTOPIA maintains strong public-private partnerships with 12 service providers and three long-haul circuit providers. UTOPIA has both local and national service providers offering traditional services, including internet connectivity between 10MB and 1 Gig, and next-generation technologies such as working cloud computing services, next-generation video products, and HD voice. UTOPIA currently supports infrastructure to nearly 50,000 addresses with well-established, scalable methods and procedures to meet its obligations to retail service providers and customers alike. The requested middle mile infrastructure will not only accommodate the nearly 400 anchors institutions: 39 schools, 1 library, 55 medical or healthcare providers, 161 public safety entities or facilities, 3 salt lake community college locations, 13 public housing facilities, 104 government facilities, and 19 other institutions or organizations, but will enable the cities to extend the infrastructure through the sustainable last mile program to a high percentage of its nearly 400,000 citizens. Historic collaboration has resulted in strong partnerships with many public safety and government entities such as the Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT) and the Utah Transit Authority (UTA). Extending the UTOPIA fiber infrastructure into the proposed service areas will allow expansion of UDOT's and UTA's capabilities while avoiding a requirement for them to seek additional funds for the telecommunications aspects of their projects. These connections will provide strategic locations for robust network access by EMS, police, and fire personnel not currently available and traffic signal monitoring and synchronization to coordinate safe traffic flows in and out of the city. The UTOPIA all-fiber true broadband network provides an exceptional platform to support emergency services and other municipal functions provided by UTOPIA's member cities. UTOPIA has also formed a close linking partnership to provide infrastructure for the the Utah Education Network (UEN) which was recently awarded $13.4 million in Recovery Act BTOP funds for 'The Utah Anchors: A Community Broadband Project' in Round 1. Our partnerships within the UTOPIA cities, among these anchor institutions, and together with our service providers create a strong network. It's said that 'Many hands make light work' but in UTOPIA's case, many hands do more than ensure our network will be a success. The many hands of our partnerships make innovation possible, make improvement possible, make economic growth possible, and make opportunities to extend meaningful services in our communities possible. We're accustomed to the kinds of partnerships in which our cities, providers, and anchor institutions work together to provide computer centers to the Boys' and Girls' Club and offer high quality services to non-profits at a reasonable cost. These partnerships allow forward-thinkers to bring new industries into the state. These partnerships enhance emergency services and improve public safety. These partnerships not only make our network a success, they make our communities a success. It's that end that will make the BTOP funds invested in UTOPIA the most successful ' to the cities of Perry, Layton, Centerville, West Valley City, Midvale, Murray, Orem, and Payson, this needed infrastructure is just the beginning.