In the arid border regions of the Texas and Mexico line, along the Rio Grande River, water is life. Without it, soil blows away, plants dry up, and growth is impeded. In the towns surrounding the Rio Grande, the situation is much the same. Locals move away, looking for jobs. Existing businesses wither to nothing, or find their growth hampered. The cause isn't water however: its broadband connectivity. With a largely industry and manufacturing economic base, the areas on the north side of the Rio Grande have found themselves especially hard-hit by the recent economic crisis. With chronically high unemployment, persistent poverty areas, and a large percentage of disadvantaged and minority populations, there is no natural attraction for businesses and industries to build or expand their footprint within the area. Business bases have fallen out from under the border towns, causing job loss ripple effects throughout the area and perpetuating a cycle of stagnant economic development and growth. As an experienced, long-term, and dedicated service provider in the region, VTCI and VTX have a vested interest in providing high-quality broadband services and robust infrastructure to the people it serves. The relationship is part of what makes the RGVFN project unique - a combination of connections between friend and neighbors, businesses and industries, academians and laypeople, providers and consumers. It's the very essence of a BTOP CCI Project. The RGVFN project proposes a service area that includes the towns of Rio Grande Valley, Harlingen, Brownsville, Edinburg, Weslaco and McAllen. Covering over 330 miles of fiber routes through city areas requiring difficult construction, the project is an ambitious one, aimed squarely at providing the type of broadband infrastructure needed to spur economic development, promote growth, connect community anchor institutions, and provide employment within the region. A total of 117,320 households reside within the proposed funded service area, which also boasts 17,170 businesses. Providing community building services to this area are 35 community anchor institutions, which VTCI and VTX propose to connect to directly using the infrastructure outlined by the RGVFN project. Included in this institutional total are a community college and 1 public safety entity. VTCI and VTX enjoy the support of many more educational institutions, and the Department of Homeland Security. The RGVFN project proposes to provide 100Mbps wholesale services to anchor institutions throughout the service area. With wholesale pricing the RGVFN project provides is much more affordable than competitors in the area, and will allow community anchor institutions to get more bandwidth for less outlay, which translates into lighter budgetary strain and enhanced services. In adherence to the BTOP NOFA's nondiscrimination and network interconnection obligations, VTCI and VTX have adopted policies for those obligations. VTCI and VTX will solely manage the proposed funded network in accordance with the FCC's Internet Policy Statement (FCC 05-151, adopted August 5, 2005) and in compliance with any future Internet policy changes by the FCC. VTCI and
VTX will offer interconnection to facilities, where technically feasible without exceeding current or reasonably anticipated capacity limitations, on reasonable rates and terms to be negotiated with requesting parties. VTCI and VTX will negotiate in good faith with all parties making a bona fide request for access to the public Internet. Interconnection includes requesting parties' ability to connect to the public Internet and physical interconnection for the exchange of Internet traffic. In accordance with the NOFA requirements, VTCI and VTX will post this Nondiscrimination and Network Management Policy statement on our website and will list each of the FCC's Internet Policy Statement points separately. VTCI proposes to build a 10 gigabit per second middle mile network connecting the 6 communities within the proposed funded service area. Management of the RGVFN network will fall upon the existing VTCI and VTX management, who have over 100 years of combined experience in telecommunications, large-scale infrastructure builds, and network management. These experienced management personnel have a level of familiarity with the communities being served by the project, and are finely attuned to the needs of those communities. When paired with the existing support mechanism and repair, customer service, network management, and provisioning processes, the qualifications of the VTCI RGVFN project management are an integral part of its success. The overall cost of the project is $22,425,509, with a 30% match being provided by VTCI and VTX. Overall subscriber estimates include 282 community anchor institutions by year eight of the financial model. The number of estimated jobs created for this project is 244, with 78 direct, 78 indirect, and 88 induced.