Florida SmartNet is a middle mile project partnership of 56 higher education institutions and 20 public broadcasting stations that was formed to create a statewide network to boost and sustain broadband access and education for all Floridians. Most of the project's partners'45 of 56 colleges and universities and 10 of 20 Florida public broadcasting stations'have no or very limited access to high speed broadband, which severely constrains their ability to deliver their highly important services. The proposed fiber network will deliver high-speed access on a shared 10 Gigabit Ethernet or 1 Gigabit Ethernet higher-performance circuits. It will be implemented utilizing DWDM and MPLS technologies - the standard for long-haul telecommunications, metropolitan area and access networks using fiber. Existing fiber access can be utilized without upgrade and to enable easy integration of new fiber routes. It will create immediate on-campus, on-line and on-air benefits and will provide expanded broadband access and education to every unserved, underserved and economically-challenged county, community and resident in the state. Florida SmartNet will benefit 18 million Floridians, their communities and their local education providers, economic development, employment opportunity, elder services and emergency management capacity. It will pass 7,302,947 households, 1,589,252 businesses and 47,385 community anchor and public safety institutions. The Florida College System (FCS) has 28 state/community colleges. The Independent Colleges and Universities of Florida (ICUF) includes 28 private/independent colleges and universities. These institutions serve over one million students in all 67 counties. In the past three years alone, the FCS has grown by more than 27%, which equates to more than 200,000 students. Every Floridian lives within 50 miles of a partner's site and most are only a few miles from one. These partners award nearly 30% of Florida's bachelor degrees and 40% of graduate degrees. FCS alone awarded 75% of all associate degrees in the state in 2007-2008. They are the primary source of post-secondary education for non-traditional, 'place-bound,' lower-income, unemployed, minority, and adult students in every Florida community. The Florida Public Broadcasting Service (FPBS) reaches 99% of Florida's population with international, national, state and local programming, including Florida's Legislative and Supreme Court sessions. With Florida SmartNet, FPBS stations can take their live literacy, science and professional development courses for teachers to an online, interactive service. These partners are already major community 'anchor' institutions that partner with local schools, libraries, local government, health care providers, business development groups, job placement centers, agencies for persons with disabilities and public safety agencies, as well as state government. SmartNet assembles these partners, aligns their technology, amasses incredible educational capacity and makes it easily available statewide through this grant. Florida is the nation's 4th largest state in population, with the 4th largest workforce and 4th largest number of businesses. Despite that, the state's current
unemployment rate is 12.8%, or more than 3% above the national average. One in 7 Floridians are on food stamps, and 1 in 7 are on Medicaid. Twenty-six of the 67 counties are rural, located in Rural Areas of Concentrated Economic Concern (RACEC). These counties, as well as many communities within the other 41 counties are economically disadvantaged and have limited access to technology and higher education. Less than half of all K-12 schools have broadband to allow for remote learning or on-line testing. Florida SmartNet will attempt to reach them all and provide the Last Mile access sites needed. Education, Economic, Employment, Elders and Emergency Management Benefits Florida SmartNet will enhance education benefits and technology investments that will create fully-wired and wireless campuses. Students on and off campus will be able to access courses, discussion groups and assignments from anywhere, anytime. Partners will be able: to improve the quality of distance learning courses; to integrate library services; and to create multi-campus business management services. In sum, they will be able to lower costs and increase program offerings by exchanging content. These partners already play a major role in public safety services. Florida SmartNet will amplify those efforts and upgrade public safety delivery statewide. The State Emergency Management Service broadcasts all of its warnings and weather alerts over a channel within the FPBS network. Those broadcasts can be added to Florida SmartNet. Seventy-three percent of Florida’s first responders (police, fire, EMTs and paramedics) and 67% of all nursing degrees come from the community colleges. These and other first responders and health care providers will be more easily able to update and expand their skills and credentials with Florida SmartNet. Approach to Addressing the Non-Discrimination and Interconnection Obligations Florida SmartNet will be consistent with the NOFA’s nondiscrimination and network interconnection obligations and is fully committed to exceeding the minimum requirements for interconnection and nondiscrimination established in section V.C.2.b. of the Federal Government’s NOFA. It will employ a staff of full time persons to ensure that this project and the use of funds are completely transparent, that the public has access to these efforts through a website and our existing non-discrimination and employment policies are followed. SmartNet will also offer wholesale access to anchor institutions and critical facilities at reasonable rates and terms that are priced lower than traditional commercial service offerings. It is anticipated that in some of the proposed areas, SmartNet will be able to implement a business plan which will allow more than one service provider to serve end users in the proposed funded service area and will provide such services to these providers on a fully non-discriminatory basis. Qualifications of the Applicants that demonstrate the ability to implement and operate broadband infrastructure, and/or be a sustainable broadband service provider. Florida SmartNet includes the existing management and operational teams of FCS, ICUF, and FPBS, as well as experienced telecommunications executives, financial managers and engineers proficient in all facets of business development, program management, network design, network integration, deployment, implementation, provisioning, and customer care. Resumes of the key team leaders are included in the Management Team Section. Florida SmartNet is ready to deploy the network facilities upon award. Signed contracts or other signed agreements are with the following firms: Project Management/Contract Operation: CGI, Inc. will provide all program management and customer care services. Project Engineering/Construction: Inspired Technologies (IT) will deliver engineering, provisioning, network management; Enterprise Technology Planning, Enterprise Architecture, Integration, Network WAN\LAN Services and Large Scale Broadband Service layers. System Integration: Telcordia Technologies, Inc., formerly Bell Labs., will provide software, engineering, consulting and
training services to design deploy and optimize the networks statewide. Environmental Services: EW Consultants, for all environmental impact issues permitting and regulatory approval and oversight management. Overall expected subscriber projections for the project: More than 550 anchor institutions, service providers and businesses within eight years. Number of jobs estimated to be created or saved as a result of this project. It is estimated that over 650,000 job-years will be created from the implementation and operation of this network based on a typical career of 40 years; 978 direct job-years will be created within the first few years. Through Florida SmartNet, the graduation rate will increase by a minimum of 5% per year through distance learning, educational broadcasting, and more effective teaching resource utilization, this expands the college-educated pool by 3,270 per year, and produces 130,800 incremental job-years over a forty year career year span for a single graduating class. With this CCI Grant, these educational and public broadcast partners will broaden broadband access, improve job growth and economic development and transform Florida's education system. Assembling these partners, aligns their technology, amasses incredible educational capacity and makes broadband easily available statewide through this grant. Through a creative use of technology SmartNet will boost the future prospects of the more than 18 million Floridians and their communities.