Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: QUINCY, CITY OF (INC)

Project Title: Gadsden Community Service Broadband Network - Bridging Northern Florida

Project Type: Comprehensive Community Infrastructure

Executive Summary

The Gadsden County area of northern Florida has not participated in the internet revolution to the degree that many other communities in Florida and elsewhere in the country have. Gadsden County is an economically underprivileged area in which more than 20% of the population lives below the federal poverty level, and the median income is more than 18% below the Florida average. As a result of these economic circumstances, existing broadband service providers are reluctant to invest in facilities that would extend or upgrade broadband service capabilities in the area. The City of Quincy proposes to deploy a hybrid fiber/WiMAX middle mile project with a limited last mile component. This ninety-one (91) miles resilient fiber backbone ring will bridge two networks: Big Bend Regional Healthcare Information Organization FCC $9 million funded network on the east and west ends of Gadsden County, connecting our newly reopened hospital to other rural hospital and clinics. In a first of its kind study (County Health Rankings, Mobilizing Action Toward Community Health, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and University of Wisconsin), Gadsden County Ranks 64th out of 67 counties in Florida in Mortality and Morbidity. Health information exchanges within and across the county is extremely important because of the relatively poor health of Gadsden County’s residents. Enhanced telecommunication services provided through the city’s Gadsden Community Services Network (GCSBN) in partnership with an equity partner is critical to improve health outcomes. Health information exchanges, e-medical record management and diagnostic image transport across the hybrid fiber/WiMAX network would contribute to improve health outcomes. GCSBN is also designed to provide the opportunity for reliable and affordable broadband internet service to residents, businesses, and community anchor institutions throughout Gadsden County. This service provides a foundation for numerous opportunities to improve services in education, economic development, public safety, and healthcare, and the City of Quincy has engaged anchor institutions and community leaders throughout the service area in planning this project to ensure that we address the opportunities that are most important to our citizens and their constituents. The proposed service area for the project is Gadsden County, Florida. It includes the communities of Quincy, Gretna, Havana, Midway and St. John, as well as rural areas outside these cities. The total area of the county, and our potential service area, is 568 square miles and includes a population of 45,087 according to 2007 census update numbers. The potential customer population includes 15,867 households, 660 businesses, and 52 community anchor institutions. The community anchor institutions include 17 schools, three libraries, one community college and two other higher education institutions, six medical and healthcare providers, 10 public safety entities, and 13 other governmental entities. Our middle mile broadband project provides wireless internet service through a broadband mesh deployed from towers and a fiber backbone.
throughout the region. Most of the towers are already in place and all are located in existing right of way, which makes deployment of the solution easier and less disruptive to the environment than other types of solutions. We will offer direct connections to community anchor institutions as part of our middle mile solutions, and will connect residents in the more rural area of St. John through our last mile solution. This last mile solution will augment the city's Smart Grid Project by servicing as the backhaul transport. The Gadsden County network completes the circuit that will allow community colleges, healthcare service providers, and other organizations in our area participate fully in regional and statewide information networks in ways that they have not previously been able to because of network limitations. We have worked closely with community anchor institutions throughout the planning stages of this project to gain a comprehensive understanding of the services and features most important to them with regard to an internet service offering. As a result, we have received commitments from more than 45 of our community anchor institutions to subscribe to the service we provide once it is available. Among the anchor institutions, schools and libraries will serve as community centers where residents can go to gain access to internet resources. The availability of reliable high-speed broadband service will enable these institutions to expand and augment the types of programs they are able to provide our citizens. In addition, the Gadsden Community Services Broadband Network is the foundational project for a companion grant we are seeking in conjunction with the National Education Foundation, which would provide a CyberLearning program for our citizens. Municipal government and public safety entities benefit from the ubiquitous nature of the wireless broadband service. Utility services for water and electricity in this area are primarily provided through municipal utility departments. The wireless deployment leverages Smart Grid capabilities that are being installed in Quincy and elsewhere in Gadsden County, and enables them to initiate smart metering technology to improve service and reduce costs. Public safety professionals can have access to necessary information and applications from anywhere in the service area rather than having to return to a central location to gain internet access. This not only enhances their access to necessary information, but saves time that may be critical in responding to citizen needs. Businesses in the area are excited about the project because it will give them the connectivity that is essential for participation in an increasingly virtual and global economy. The project also benefits the community by creating an estimated 65 job years over the life of the grant period. Residential customers will have expanded opportunities to participate in the services our community anchor institutions have to offer, which will yield benefits in education, healthcare, and employment activities. The residents of our public housing communities who are receiving broadband internet service for the first time will benefit most significantly from our last mile service offering. The City of Quincy, as the project leader for the Gadsden Community Service Broadband Project, has the experience and capabilities necessary to manage this project to completion. We are a regional municipal utility provider experienced in serving subscribers through our water and electric utilities, and our information technology (IT) and public works departments have extensive track records of implementing and managing large-scale installation projects on time and on budget. We have partnered with Honeywell Building Solutions for their expertise in designing and deploying wireless broadband systems for both private and public entities. Xiocom and Honeywell have been instrumental in designing our solution and planning for successful project execution. We have also partnered with Mainstreet Broadband, a regional internet service provider, to provide sales and marketing support for the project. Finally, we have partnered with the Big Bend Regional Healthcare Information Organization to provide
customized services for healthcare organizations in our service area. The Gadsden Community Service Broadband Network represents a very reasonable investment of BTOP grant funds. The overall cost to completely deploy this solution is $374 per household. The benefits this project offers to the residents, businesses, and community anchor institutions in Gadsden County are substantial for such a modest investment. The City of Quincy has worked with our partners to provide matching contributions well in excess of the 20% required for the BTOP grant, as a further measure of our community’s commitment to this project. The Gadsden Community Service Broadband Network offers the opportunity to greatly enhance the resources and services available to the citizens of our communities. We have completed an extensive process to gain input from the community to determine the services we are providing as part of this project, and in the process have secured the broadest possible commitment and support from residents, businesses, and community anchor institutions alike. We have the technical capability and management and administrative infrastructure in place to carry out this project successfully and to sustain it for the long term, even after the grant period has completed. The communities and citizens of Gadsden County are excited to participate in this opportunity to bring reliable, affordable high-speed internet service to our area.