Applicant Name: OCONEE, COUNTY OF

Project Title: Oconee FOCUS (Fiber Optics Creating Unified Solutions)

Project Type: Comprehensive Community Infrastructure

Executive Summary

Executive Summary: Background and Description of Proposed Funded Service Areas Applicant Oconee County SC is seeking approximately $15.2 million in grant funding through the National Telecommunications and Information Administration's Broadband Technologies Opportunity Program ("BTOP") for the construction of a fiber optic communications network in Oconee County of South Carolina (the "Oconee County Fiber Project" or "Project"). Oconee County is a public body, corporate and politic, of the State of South Carolina. The demand for communications bandwidth to support community economic development, education and public safety has escalated geometrically, as have the costs for the delivery of that bandwidth from traditional sources. The escalating costs for traditional services are tied directly to the lack of vital communications infrastructure, having the further consequence of limiting the availability of reasonably priced broadband to the region and thereby creating underserved and un-served areas in Oconee County, South Carolina. Indeed, Oconee County has become the technological equivalent of the 1930's farmstead that served as the basis for the Rural Electrification Act. In the 1930s, the U.S. lagged in providing electricity to rural areas due to the unwillingness of power companies to serve farmsteads that were considered low density and required significant capital investments to reach resulting in a lack of profitability. Private power companies set rural rates four times as high as city rates Under the REA, significant investments were made by the Federal Government to bring this basic utility to these areas. Today, we find ourselves in the identical situation with Broadband access. According to ESRI data, only 30.3% of residents have access to terrestrial broadband. To rectify this situation, Oconee County plans to deploy a 245-mile fiber optic backbone connecting its Anchor Institutions and laying the groundwork for last mile connection of business, public safety and residential customers to true high speed broadband services. Oconee County plans not only to fulfill its own immediate and future needs, but also to provide a conduit for vitalizing adjacent Cities, Counties and States as well. Through this Application, Oconee County seeks grant funding under BTOP in order to provide access to broadband service to underserved and unserved areas, to improve access to, and use of, broadband service by public safety agencies, and to stimulate the demand for broadband, economic growth, and job creation. Under the BTOP, this infrastructure would constitute a 'Middle-Mile' project. The proposed fiber build, in the form of a number of nested physical rings, will cover over 90% of the County and interconnect with adjacent cities and states. The rings will pass through the Cities of Seneca, Walhalla, West Union, Westminster and Salem South Carolina. The unincorporated communities of Long Creek, Mountain Rest, Townville, Oakway, Fair Play and Keowee will also benefit from interconnection to the fiber network. Adjacent States of Georgia and North Carolina may be connected as well for carrier transport purposes through the Oconee County. The
service area exists within the 3rd Congressional District of South Carolina. The Project will begin construction within thirty days of the notice of grant award and contemplates completion of all phases of the construction within two years. Number of households and businesses passed The total number of households that will be passed by the Project is 25,200. The total number of businesses that will be passed by the Project is 2,230. Number of community anchor institutions, public safety entities, and critical community organizations passed and/or involved with the project The Project will be involved with approximately 75 public facilities including hospitals, schools, libraries and health care facilities, emergency evacuation shelters and Public Safety Search and Rescue staging areas. Proposed Services and Applications As described in more detail in Oconee County’s response to Question 10, the Project will provide critical broadband infrastructure that will benefit the County through connection of a number of Anchor locations and by providing much needed high speed data as an enabler for applications. For example, the Project will facilitate the expansion of medical and health-related programs to areas that are currently physically or financially unreachable, and connect larger hospital complexes with smaller counterparts in more rural communities. The Project will also support multiple municipal services, including public safety and public utility access. Additionally, the Project will interconnect Federal, State, and Local Governmental agencies throughout the County. Rural Fire Stations, Evacuation Centers, Community Centers, Search and Rescue Staging Areas and Public Wireless access points provide a sustainable infrastructure to support much needed data and communications services. Oconee County is creating partnerships with various public and private entities to maximize the value of the Project. Those entities, which are also described in more detail in response to Question 10, include last-mile service providers and other organizations that will help expand the communications potential of the project. Non-Discrimination and Interconnection Obligations The Project will comply with the non-discrimination obligations contained in the NOFA and will adhere to the principles of the FCC’s Internet Policy Statement, dated August 5, 2005. More specifically, Oconee County will not favor or disfavor any lawful Internet content or applications. Oconee County will post any network management policies in a prominent location on its web site. Oconee County will allow interconnection and transport, at reasonable rates and terms, where technically feasible and when it can be done without exceeding network capacity. Oconee County agrees to negotiate network interconnection rates and terms in good faith. The building and maintenance of middle-mile infrastructure by public entities allows for the leasing of capacity or fibers to service providers at sufficiently low rates to reduce capital expenditures to the point where a business model becomes sustainable. Oconee County, as a public body, will provide the needed transport capacity in a non-discriminatory fashion, encouraging the provision of competitive services throughout the region, stimulating technology adoption and economic development. Type of broadband system that will be deployed (network type and technology standard) The Oconee County Project is based upon the need to provide a combined dark fiber and transport network to the communities in Oconee County of South Carolina. The network will involve approximately 245 route miles of various count fiber constructed in a series of redundant nested rings, to be available in a non-discriminatory fashion to all interested parties. Applicant Qualifications Oconee County maintains a $3.1M I/T Infrastructure to support a core of County Government. Oconee County has partnered with Technology Solutions of SC, AFL Telecommunications and a number of private consultants to engineer, build and operate the system. Oconee County has a number of private entities that have already expressed a desire to provide services to Oconee County