Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name:  UTE INDIAN TRIBE

Project Title:  Ute Indian Tribe of the Uintah and Ouray Reservation Fiber Optic Infrastructure Project

Project Type:  Comprehensive Community Infrastructure

_______________________ Executive Summary _______________________

The Ute Indian Tribe (UIT) a valid and recognized tribal entity, (as defined in section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 450b)) proposes to build a fiber infrastructure that is directly in line with the goals of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). It is applying for a grant in the total project amount of $2,253,154, with 30 percent, cash match to come from the Ute Indian Tribe, and if approved, an additional 10-15% in-kind match. These funds will finish a project that was underway but halted due to the economic downturn. The purposes of this project are as follows: 1. Provide a secure network to interconnect Tribal Government, BIA, and other Federal agencies. 2. Substantially upgrade services to all community anchor, education, healthcare, and public safety institutions. 3. Bolster communication between the public-private sector and Tribal Government. 4. Stimulate the demand for broadband by providing Internet service to the entire underserved Fort Duchesne Tribal community. One of the Tribal Governments’ objectives is to make critical decisions that support the Ute Indian Tribe’s business strategies, processes and operations; they realize technology enables its people to be more efficient by providing resources necessary to accomplish their jobs better. However, the infrastructure available in the rural setting in which the tribe operates provides some unique challenges; specifically, overcoming the lack of connectivity between vital anchor institutions. Vital departments such as Indian Health Service’s (IHS) and the Alcohol and Drug, Health and Well Being programs, Social Services, and Diabetes center do not have inter-connectivity. This forces each to operate on a less than efficient island, not being able to share electronic medical records (EMR), progress reports, etc. It does not allow them to counter possible pandemics through online education or take advantage of the quick distribution of information. It also forces them to forego cost savings introduced by connectivity. The tribal government has recognized in the past it has not been in a financial position to take part in the advancement’s in technology, and has in recent years made concerted efforts to get its government and people up to ‘speed’. It has invested heavily in the technology in areas public safety, education, accounting controls, and other basic government support programs. Currently the tribe is implementing Police and Tribal Court systems to allow for electronic case management. It plans to involve other supporting agencies such as Juvenal court, Probation, Social Services, EMS, Fire, and the Crises and Emergency Management department. However, there is currently no infrastructure between many of these buildings. Therefore, this grant is an opportunity for the current investment to be more effective by creating the critical link between local, inter-tribal, state, and federal agencies. The purposed connectivity will also allow existing video surveillance platforms to be cohesive; providing the connectivity that is vital for public safety and unforeseen accountability. It will allow for future implementations of surveillance platforms not currently possible, such as traffic
cameras and surveillance of critical resources targeted by groups or individuals unsympathetic towards the tribal government. The Education Department of the tribe has made investments in programs that offer the ability for students to continue their work from home as well as adults to further their education. However, many tribal members cannot get, or cannot afford, internet access at home. Building this infrastructure will help bridge that connectivity gap. Wireless hot spots in the community will provide Internet access to the low-income residential areas immediately adjacent to the tribal headquarters. In no un-certain terms this will provide more opportunity for tribal members, helping them to succeed in today’s technology driven society. While making sure that networks inter-operate, the larger goal of the tribal government has to be to protect tribal data sovereignty. In today’s information, age this does not only mean the right to keep data private, but also the ability to so do. If tribes do not control their own networks, computers, and data, they are simply forfeiting sovereignty. Any information that passes through third-party systems is at risk. Funds made available in the Recovery Act will help the Ute Tribe finish its vision of a connected government and community. The down turn in the economy, and thus the downturn in tribal revenues, has put this project on an indefinite hold. Funds from this grant will aid the tribal government in completing this project and make the most of its prior investments in technology; helping the government to be more efficient in providing critical government services to its constituents. For all of the above reasons the Ute Tribe of the Uintah and Ouray Reservation grateful for the opportunity to take advantage of the broadband funds made available in the Recovery Act and will build a solid infrastructure to interconnect critical services and still protect tribal sovereignty. Current tribal investments and support from all aforementioned anchor institutions will drive this project through to fruition—Making it a success for all involved.