

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

CommunityConnect, Inc. (“CCI”), a South Carolina “C” corporation with the support of The County of Anderson, South Carolina (the “County”) submit this proposal for consideration of funding under the RUS Broadband Initiatives Program (BIP) and the NTIA Broadband Telecommunications Opportunity Program (BTOP) of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, (“Stimulus Act”) Public Law No. 111-5.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this project is to provide high speed broadband and Internet to the Upstate region of South Carolina, specifically the counties of Anderson, Oconee and Pickens (“Tri-County” region) by rapidly constructing an ubiquitous WiMAX network that will meet needs of the community, the County, and the objectives of the Stimulus Act.

These counties are primarily rural areas with high unemployment and currently have limited access to high speed Internet and broadband services. There is a pressing need to modernize not only the public network, but also the public safety force, emergency facilities and the public safety infrastructure of Tri-County region. CommunityConnect, Inc. and Anderson County have developed a plan to address these requirements.

Because first responders and other critical community facilities do not currently have adequate access to the Internet, the County of Anderson has entered into a partnership with CommunityConnect, Inc. to bring these services to the region. The partnership intends to develop and provide high speed Internet, broadband voice and broadband video applications that will directly impact the general public, public safety, child welfare, education, health delivery services and further create jobs and economic opportunity throughout these communities.¹

¹ Refer to the Anderson County / CommunityConnect Public Private Partnership “Goals & Objectives” in the supplemental section of this grant application.

BACKGROUND

CommunityConnect, Inc. (CCI) and its management team are well versed in the challenges and opportunities of bringing meaningful broadband to rural communities and seeing the difference it makes in the lives of rural consumers. Since its inception in 2006,² CommunityConnect's primary mission has been to bring affordable broadband to rural, unserved and underserved communities. Currently, CommunityConnect serves the greater Anderson, SC area using fixed WiMAX and other wireless and wireline technologies, providing its customers with high speed Internet, VoIP and other related services.

CCI is proud that its networks are bringing next-generation broadband capabilities to rural America first, technology that is not even available to some consumers in urban areas yet. CCI's efforts also bring local jobs to these areas in the form of managers, network engineers, technicians, customer service specialists and sales people.

The management team at CommunityConnect has many decades of experience in the communications industry. This team has previously built two of the most successful competitive local exchange carriers in the United States: 1) ACC National Telecom, based in Rochester, NY, the nation's first CLEC – now a wholly owned subsidiary of AT&T and 2) NewSouth Communications, based in Greenville, South Carolina, now Nuvox Communications. ACC and NewSouth each provided bundled voice and data services to hundreds of Tier I – IV communities, government agencies, colleges and universities across the Northeastern and Southeastern United States.

SERVICE AREA & FUNDING NEEDS

This project will serve, at a minimum, the below listed communities and surrounding areas in the Tri-County region. The network, utilizing WiMAX 802.16d technology and the 3650 MHz frequency range, will cover a population of approximately 325,000 people, covers 1,475 square

² The company first launched service in March of 2006 under the name CommunityConnect, LLC. The company was reorganized as a "C" corporation in March 2008.

miles and reach 141,250 households, 25,624 businesses and 234 community anchor institutions, public safety entities, and critical community organizations.

This funding request is for \$9,782,924 to extend CommunityConnect, Inc.’s existing WiMAX access points to blanket this area:

SERVICE AREA		
Anderson County SC	Pickens County SC	Oconee County SC
Anderson	Clemson	Salem
Belton	Easley	Seneca
Iva	Liberty	Walhalla
Pelzer	Pickens	Westminster
Pendleton	Central	
Williamston	Norris	
Star	Six Mile	

JOBS CREATED OR SAVED

The Upstate region of South Carolina has one of the highest unemployment rates in the nation. This project, and the grant funding, will directly create approximately 75 jobs in the immediate area. The direct job creation includes, but is not limited to, infrastructure engineers, installation engineers, managers, sales professionals, accounting and finance professionals, tech support representatives and customer service representatives. In the first two years the company will spend approximately \$3,300,000 in salary and benefits directly in the target communities. Bringing advanced broadband services to the region will also allow existing businesses to expand their capacity to do business outside of the region giving them a larger marketplace that will fuel growth and job creation. Having advanced broadband services in the region is critical to attracting new businesses and additional primary employers.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED FUNDED SERVICE AREA

This funding request is for \$9,782,924 to extend CommunityConnect, Inc.’s existing WiMAX access points to provide high speed broadband wireless internet access to [REDACTED] homes. These

are three very rural counties in South Carolina with many underserved and unserved communities. The company expects to serve [REDACTED] users, including [REDACTED] households, [REDACTED] businesses, and [REDACTED] public safety, anchor institutions, public safety entities, and critical community organizations.

Without stimulus funding these communities will not be likely to receive broadband services any time in the near future, as they have been requesting it for many years now and no carrier has arrived to provide service. The population density and terrain do not meet most carriers' new network development criteria, so these communities have historically been passed by and without this project have little prospect of receiving these services in the near term.

PROPOSED SERVICES AND APPLICATIONS FOR THE PROPOSED FUNDED SERVICE AREAS AND USERS

The wireless portion of the network to be deployed will be a WiMAX technology offering in the 3650 MHz spectrum (IEEE 802.16d standard). The minimum service offering will be 3 Mbps down and 500 kbps up. Customers will be able purchase up to 10 Mbps downstream and 2 Mbps upstream and business would have customizable options to serve all their bandwidth needs. In addition to data services CommunityConnect, Inc. will offer VoIP telephone services to provide local and long distance dial tone.

Also, any number of service providers will be able to offer Internet connectivity, digital television, advanced email and web hosting services, VoIP or whatever product and services can be achieved over the network. The WiMAX network in this proposal will have the speed to deliver these services today, and the open access network will enable the communities in this proposal and its residents to gain access to these "next generation network" (NGN) services in the future.

AN OPEN ACCESS NETWORK

A unique feature of this proposal is that the entire network to be constructed will be an open access network ("OAN"). In contrast to traditional private networks this open access network will allow multiple service providers to compete over the same network. They will pay wholesale prices and establish their own retail pricing strategy. What this means is multiple

service providers can purchase access to the network in order to serve and win their own customers. Any number of service providers could offer Internet connectivity, digital television, advanced email and web hosting services, VoIP or whatever product and services can be achieved over a high-speed broadband network. This introduces competition in the areas covered by the network and ensures customers a choice of services based on best price and best quality of service.

This OAN will require network management, provisioning, billing and settlement systems that can support multiple service providers and multiple services on shared infrastructure. Traditional telecommunications systems are not typically capable of supporting an OAN based business model. CommunityConnect, Inc. will have systems to provide network management, provisioning, billing and provisioning systems utilizing the dBoss™ system.

SUMMARY

This project is a public private partnership between Anderson County, South Carolina and CommunityConnect, Inc. that will serve the needs of the public and have direct impact on public safety, child welfare and healthcare. This plan has been strongly endorsed by: The State of South Carolina Department of Commerce, U.S. Congressman J. Gresham Barrett, Anderson County South Carolina, South Carolina Senator Vincent A. Sheheen, and TriCounty Technical College. This plan is shovel ready, will begin immediately upon confirmation of funding and will directly employ a minimum of 75 people with additional employment added by contracted services.

CommunityConnect's management team is highly experienced, resourceful and has a track record of success in building and scaling telecommunications companies ranging from start-up to multi-national firms. The company is investing \$[REDACTED] of its own resources into this plan; however the project cannot be completed without the funding provided by the BIP or BTOP programs. We believe we meet or exceed all of the criteria set forth to receive funding under the Stimulus Act and therefore respectfully request that all due consideration be given to this request and proposal.