

Executive Summary & Grant Rationale

The Spencer County Fiber Broadband Project submitted by Perry-Spencer Rural Telephone Cooperative, Inc. d/b/a/ PSC (PSC) will provide state-of-the-art broadband services via fiber-to-the-premises (FTTP) technology to 934 unserved locations in the rural communities of Chrisney, Dale, Gentryville, Grandview, and Santa Claus in southern Indiana. This fiber broadband infrastructure will provide the ultimate in broadband capabilities by enabling up to 1 Gbps (1,000 Mbps) broadband services to each subscriber in the proposed funded service area. This proposed project will enable a wide variety of services to be delivered to the end customers including high-speed Internet, over-the-top video services, voice over Internet protocol (VoIP) services, home automation and monitoring services, distance learning, telehealth services, and numerous other applications. Building FTTP infrastructure will improve the lives of the residential customers and will enable home-based businesses to compete in a global economy.

PSC has developed a plan to provide state-of-the-art broadband services to unserved and underserved portions of Perry and Spencer counties in southern Indiana. This plan includes preliminary layouts and design for a comprehensive broadband network deployment. In addition to the 934 unserved homes and businesses that are included in the Spencer County Fiber Broadband Project application, PSC has identified 767 underserved locations in adjacent areas that are not deemed eligible for this grant program. If awarded a Next Level Connections grant for this application, PSC will invest an additional \$2.2 million to provide fiber broadband services to these underserved areas.

PSC has extensive experience deploying fiber broadband networks in Dubois, Perry, Pike, Spencer, and Warrick counties in Indiana. In addition, PSC has existing middle mile transport electronics, core data network equipment, voice switching equipment, and connections to upstream Internet Service Providers (ISPs) that will enable a cost-effective and time-efficient implementation of this project. PSC will utilize its existing staff to provide marketing, sales, installation, maintenance, and support of broadband services. PSC is leveraging the strength of its existing cooperative to ensure a quality broadband network deployment that is both time-efficient and cost-effective. Utilizing its existing staff and infrastructure, as well as augmenting personnel as necessary, will enable PSC to effectively manage and sustain this broadband network deployment.

The proposed Spencer County Fiber Broadband Project will provide numerous benefits to the community. Building a FTTP network that provides the ultimate in broadband services to the farms and residences of the proposed grant area will enable these farmers to access applications and tools to make their operation more efficient and enhance their crop production. The economic benefit of helping these farmers be more successful will trickle down to other businesses and individuals in and around the area. In addition, the robust fiber broadband network proposed for the Spencer County Fiber Broadband Project will provide the necessary incentives for developers to build housing, attract younger workers and attract potential employers. Enabling the residents of Spencer County to enjoy the quality of life afforded by living in rural Indiana, while still having the ability to work for virtually any employer via the use of telecommuting will have a positive impact on future population and economic growth of this region. This is especially critical for Spencer County and is underscored by a locally funded 2015 housing study where

it was learned that more than 30% of Spencer County workers were employed outside of Spencer County.

A second benefit of the proposed Spencer County Fiber Broadband Project is access to better health care. Rural areas have unique challenges when it comes to having access to quality health care, and there are no hospitals located within Spencer County. Some residents are forced to travel as much as an hour away for emergency medical care and other essential health services. The ability to deliver such high-bandwidth broadband services enables applications such as telehealth. These services enable a patient to consult with their doctor without ever leaving their home. In addition, there are services that the broadband network will enable that may allow aging adults or individuals living with disabilities to remain in their home instead of being moved to a care facility. This improves quality of life for those individuals. In addition, the proposed broadband network will provide distinct benefits to first responders, paramedics, and rural doctors to share medical information and start vital treatment to a patient while an ambulance is traveling to the hospital.

Another primary benefit of the Spencer County Fiber Broadband Project is the ability to provide access to education to those customers in the proposed grant area. In his letter of support for the Spencer County Fiber Broadband Project, Richard Rutherford, the Superintendent of South Spencer School Corporation, indicated that “we lose many families each year who will not buy a house in the South Spencer area because they do not have internet.” In addition, he stated that “At South Spencer, we are one to one with electronic devices for all our students. We have I-pads in grades K-2 and Chromebooks in grades 3-12. We use e-Learning days instead of make-up days for snow or weather days. The lack of internet is a challenge for many of our students...” Dan Scherry, Superintendent of the North Spencer County School Corporation provided a letter of support for the Spencer County Fiber Broadband Project. In his letter, Mr. Scherry stated “We are currently 1:1 with technology devices KG-Grade 12 in our school corporation. However, the lack of district-wide broadband service severely limits those students living outside of a very centralized area, when it comes to fully utilizing the school issued devices.” Having access to high school and college classes online help to educate the low-income individuals and provide them the tools to improve their financial well-being.

PSC has a strong desire to provide the best service and the best price to its customers. However, it is also necessary to make sound business decisions. As shown in the financial projections, this project is not feasible without grant funding. Therefore, this grant funding is necessary for this project to proceed.

PSC has the expertise and experience to successfully complete the proposed FTTP project. PSC has been committed to providing state-of-the-art telecommunications for over 65 years, deploying FTTP technologies for the last 12 years. This alone demonstrates their ability to sustain and manage the proposed Spencer County Fiber Broadband Project. In addition, the Spencer County Fiber Broadband Project will serve a critical need to provide economic development, to enable access to education services, and to improve the quality of life to individuals via telehealth and other similar services.