Executive Summary & Grant Rationale

- Brief project description/summary (less than 150 words)

This project will establish a fiber network that will serve 73 unserved households and at least six unserved businesses and anchor institutions in Henry County. In a funding partnership with the State of Indiana and Henry County REMC, Central Indiana Communications, Inc (d/b/a NineStar Communications) will improve unserved levels to up to 1 gigabyte per second up and 1 gigabyte per second down by December 2021.

Increasing the access and speed of broadband throughout the community will unlock the employment potential of the less densely populated or developed areas of the county. Increased access to high speed connections will create opportunity for more small businesses to operate, for more students to research and learn, and for hospitals to serve patients more quickly. Farms in the proposal area will have more access to online resources and the global community to learn about new technologies and innovation.

- A general geographic location of the project (not census blocks) and total number of passings estimated to be made as a result of the grant project.

The area to be served lies within the boundaries of West County Road 100 South to the north and West County Road 500 South to the south. The western border is South County Road 500 West, and the area is bordered on the east by Indiana State Road 3. The proposed fiber network is all contained inside eligible areas within Henry County.

A total of 73 homes will be connected to the network along with at least two farms, one business and two homes where people work from home. There are 199 additional addresses in non-eligible blocks which could potentially receive fiber-to-the-home services in the future via this construction.

- A brief description of the applicant’s involvement in the project to date and how the applicant (and/or partners) intends to manage and sustain the project.

Central Indiana Communications, Inc. and Henry County REMC have already planned a pilot build-out of fiber in part of Henry County. These grant funds will allow them to vastly increase the served areas and to reach many rural residences that otherwise would be cost-prohibitive to provide broadband service.

Central Indiana Communications, Inc has extensive experience in building and maintaining fiber networks, with demonstrated success throughout East Central Indiana. The partnership between Central Indiana Communications, Inc. and Henry County REMC provides additional advantages. Henry County REMC has developed the infrastructure for a project like this with telephone poles, access points, and relationships with customers and county officials. Central Indiana Communications, Inc. brings their expertise in designing,
constructing, and providing broadband service to rural areas. Their technical assistance and expertise allow Henry County REMC to expand into a new service line to better serve their rural customers.

The proposed network is expected to serve Henry County residents for 50+ years. The two partners will work together to ensure regular maintenance and that speeds are sustained as promised. Financial information included in this application demonstrates that the organizations have budgeted funds for maintaining their network and plans for financial sustainability.

- A statement on how broadband improvements will advance the quality of life and strengthen economic development opportunities in the communities in the project area

Quality of life will improve in many ways in Henry County once this broadband system is in place, including in increased economic development opportunities. Broadband is specifically mentioned in the 2018 Henry County Comprehensive Plan for Economic Development as a necessary community resource for improving the local economy and allowing the community to grow and thrive. Entrepreneurs, students, clinicians, and employees of companies across the nation will be able to work at home, resulting in more opportunities for growth, learning, and efficiency.

Increased access to high-speed internet will allow for more flexibility and connectedness for the residents of the county. Students will be better able to learn about any topic through academic resources available online. Parents will be able to work from home to take care of their children or to research effective parenting practices, great schools, and high-quality child care programs. Students who are homeschooled or interested in achieving an advanced degree will be able to access online educational content. Homeowners will have access to information about basic home repairs, well-reviewed contractors, and price-comparison tools. Businesses will have broader access to markets outside the region, for efficiencies in purchasing and to increase their potential markets.